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# C O N T E N T S

\*\*\*\*\*

	<u>Page</u>
FOREWORD - Prof. Yoshikazu Tokuzen	1
1. LUTHER STUDIES SYMPOSIUM I (Hong Kong 1980)	
"The Augsburg Confession in Asia Today"	
1.1 LECTURES:	
1.1.1 The Augsburg Confession in Asia Today - Prof. Yoshikazu Tokuzen	4
1.1.2 The Living God and New Humanity - Dr. Won Yong Ji	10
1.1.3 Church, Ministry and Sacrament - Dr. B.H. Jackayya	23
1.1.4 The Church in the World - Dr. S.M. Hutagalung	46
1.2 REACTIONS:	
1.2.1 Reaction to Lecture 1.1.1 - Dr. Choong Chee Pang	57
1.2.2 Reaction to Lecture 1.1.2 - Prof. Ogbu U. Kalu	70
1.2.3 Reaction to Lecture 1.1.3 - Dr. John Tong	74
1.2.4 Reaction to Lecture 1.1.4 - Dr. Walter Altmann	76
1.3 FINAL REPORT, INCLUDING GROUP REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - Dr. S. Hebart	81
1.4 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	92

## II

2. LUTHER STUDIES SYMPOSIUM II ( Bangkok 1982)	<u>Page</u>
"Luther's Thought on Nature and the Natural in the Asian Context"	
2.1 LECTURES:	
2.1.1 Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Classical Asian Religions - Rev. Arnold Yeung	96
2.1.2 Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Asian Animism and Primal Religion - Dr. Adelbert Sitompul	110
2.1.3 Nature and the Natural in Luther's Thought - Prof. Yoshikazu Tokuzen	123
2.1.4 The Significance of Luther's Thought on Nature in the Christian Witness in Asia Today - Dr. Choong Chee Pang	130
2.2 REACTIONS:	
2.2.1 Reaction to Lecture 2.1.1 - Dr. Andrew Chiu	142
2.2.2 Reaction to Lecture 2.1.2 - Dr. John S. Tilak	145
2.2.3 Reaction to Lecture 2.1.3 - Dr. Maurice Schild	148
2.2.4 Reaction to Lecture 2.1.4 - Dr. José Fuliga	156
2.3 FINAL REPORT, INCLUDING GROUP REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - Dr. S. Hebart	158
2.4 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	171

### III

	<u>Page</u>
3. LUTHER STUDIES SYMPOSIUM III (Manila 1984)	
"The Holy Spirit and Christian Witness in Asia"	
3.1 LECTURES:	
3.1.1 Spirit and Spirits in Animistic Religions - Dr. José Fuliga	174
3.1.2 Spirit and Spirits in Classical Asian Religions and Traditions - Dr. Andrew Chiu	189
3.1.3 Concepts of Spirit and Spirits in Asian Socio-Cultural Spheres - Dr. S. Hutagalung	208
3.1.4 Luther's Concept of the Holy Spirit - Dr. Maurice Schild	224
3.1.5 The Works of the Holy Spirit and the Charismatic Movements - Dr. Won Yong Ji	244
3.2 REACTIONS:	
3.2.1 Reaction to Lecture 3.1.1 - Dr. Adelbert Sitompul	266
3.2.2 Reaction to Lecture 3.1.2 - Rev. G. D. Melanchthon	270
3.2.3 Reaction to Lecture 3.1.3 - Rev. Gernot Fugmann	273
3.2.4 Reaction to Lecture 3.1.4 - Prof. Yoshikazu Tokuzen	287
3.2.5 Reaction to Lecture 3.1.5 - Rev. Akio Hashimoto	290
3.3 FINAL REPORT, INCLUDING GROUP REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - Rev. Maynard Dorow	295
3.4 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	310





## FOREWORD

When I attended the meeting on Theological Education (Training for Witness and Service) in Asia in Manila in October 1976, we were all confronted by the issues of identity, relevance, and commitment. With this threefold concern in mind, and seeking to make our Lutheran contribution in Asia in an ecumenical context, we made the following recommendations:

- a) Luther studies should be encouraged both in theological education programs, including research, and in parish education programs, also in the catechetical instruction of the laity.
- b) Theological teachers in each of our countries should be trained in Luther studies; an exchange of such teachers should be envisaged.
- c) If area seminars are conducted, aspects of Luther studies should be included.
- d) Material for Luther studies should be produced by Asian writers; translations of Luther's Small Catechism are necessary, and guidelines for the writing of study materials, including textbooks, should be laid down.
- e) Teams of writers should be sponsored to prepare general outline material which seeks to interpret the Lutheran heritage for the Asian context and which could then be developed by local writers for their own situation.

In accordance with the common understanding among participants in the consultation of the urgent need for Luther studies in our several Asian countries, we suggested several possibilities to the LWF for consideration. These included an Asian Study Conference of Lutheran Theologians to explore basic themes of Luther's theology and its application to our local situation; exchange of theological educators between Asia and Africa so they could learn from each other and share insights gained from Luther studies; and the compilation of bibliographies of material on Luther by Asians.

This concern for Luther studies in Asia was discussed at several subsequent conferences and consultations of Lutherans in Asia: the Asia Lutheran Conference in December 1976 in Singapore, a church leaders' consultation on Asian Quest for Mission in Asia in Manila, April 1979. With the dynamic support and coordination of Drs. Adelbert Sitompul and Kunchala Rajaratnam, both of whom served for several years on the staff of the LWF, in the Department of Studies and the Department of Church Cooperation respectively, this concern was given concrete form when we came together in Hong Kong in March 1979 for the Luther Studies Workshop on "The Gospel and Asian Traditions" sponsored by the Asia Program for the Advancement of Training and Studies (APATS). At the end of the workshop, after studying and discussing some themes related to Luther's theology and Lutheran tradition in the Asian context, we recommended the holding of a Luther Studies Symposium in summer 1980, the year of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. As a theme appropriate for that year we chose "The Augsburg Confession in Asia Today - Relevance and Challenge for Mission and Ecumenism". We set up a preparatory committee which met in March 1980 in Hong Kong and made the decision to have the symposium in December in Osaka, Japan (this was lat-

er changed to Hong Kong).

Some 30 theologians, not only from Asian countries but also from Brazil, Denmark, and Nigeria, gathered in Hong Kong December 1-6, 1980, for a symposium which was the final program in the anniversary celebrations of the Augsburg Confession. It was an Asian symposium, but at the same time international through the variety of backgrounds of the participants. It was Lutheran but with an ecumenical concern; we had both an African Presbyterian theologian from Nigeria and a Catholic Father from Hong Kong as reactors.

Two more symposia were held, in 1982 and in 1984, in compliance with the agreed plans, patterns and structures. The second one, prepared again by the same preparatory committee, which met in December 1980 right after the first symposium in Hong Kong, and again in May 1981 in Bangkok, was held in Bangkok December 2-7, 1981, under the theme "Luther's Thought on Nature and the Natural in the Asian Context". It was also followed by a preparatory committee meeting in Bangkok and then in Hong Kong in March 1983. The third one, the last of the series, was held in Manila December 6-11, 1984, under the theme "The Holy Spirit and Christian Witness in Asia". Each symposium was attended by about 30 theologians, mostly from Asian Lutheran churches, together with representatives from other continents like Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe, as well as from non-Lutheran theologians. They contributed to the symposia in different ways through lectures, reactions and participation in discussions. One of the characteristics of these three symposia was that we invited the non-Asian and non-Lutheran representatives not as lecturers or leaders, but with the expectation that they might be sincere listeners of Asian voices and good partners in discussion. This original intention of the preparatory committee was actualized not only in the program of the symposia, but also through their participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to all who made these symposia possible, and also to the lecturers, reactors, group leaders and secretaries, especially the patient listeners, as mentioned above. I cannot forget all their contributions. I am also very grateful to the local committees, in Hong Kong, Bangkok and Manila respectively, which did everything possible to make our symposia effective and comfortable. Thanks also to the LWF which facilitated our efforts through its APATS fund.

I hope this volume makes contributions to Luther studies in Asia so that non-Western voices and contributions might be an important part of Luther studies on the world level. The fact that the next International Congress for Luther Research in 1988 will have a special session devoted to the presentation and discussion of Asian and African perceptions of Luther, could be understood as one positive reaction towards our efforts during these past years. With this hope we will begin our meeting of the new preparatory committee of the new series of symposia this December.

August 1985

Yoshikazu Tokuzen  
Chairperson of the Preparatory  
Committee, 1980-1985

I

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN ASIA TODAY:

RELEVANCE AND CHALLENGE FOR MISSION AND ECUMENISM

Report of the First Luther Studies  
Symposium held December 1-6, 1980  
in Hong Kong, sponsored by the  
LWF APATS-Program (Asian Program  
for the Advancement of Training  
and Studies).

## THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN ASIA TODAY

Yoshikazu Tokuzen

### 1. Introduction

Almost all the programs in the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession (AC) are now over except ours. The main event was in Augsburg in June, about which we have had some information. But looking at these programs, we cannot say whether the celebrations have been successful or not. Many books and articles have been written on the AC, but we cannot say whether these publications are significant or not. It is true that we have learned much in the course of this anniversary year. We have gained new perspectives on the historical background and situation and been made aware of approaches for the systematic study of this historical document. But we must say that to learn history means to learn from history in order to live in our own situation. Therefore the text of the AC should be read and understood in particular contexts, in the context of the time in which it was written and in our own contexts.

Compared with celebrations of AC jubilees in the past, this one has had two remarkable features. For instance, the 400th anniversary in 1930 was celebrated in an almost exclusively Lutheran and European context. But this time the AC has been considered in both ecumenical and global contexts. We have been informed of the possibility of its recognition by the Roman Catholic Church. Other denominations have shown their readiness to have an ecumenical dialogue in which A.C. has been taken seriously. And in this ecumenical dialogue, the original intention of the document has been pointed out and emphasized, namely, that the A.C. was originally not a Lutheran confession but a reform proposal of the reformation movement in the Catholic Church in the west at that time. Along with Dr. Schlink we can in this sense speak about the "rediscovery" of the A.C.

Moreover, we ourselves have experienced the "rediscovery" of the A.C. also in the global context. For the first time in history, this Christian document is being given consideration around the world. The so-called younger churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America, not only Lutherans but also other Christians, are asked, or rather are asking, whether the A.C. is still relevant in their own context. In this connection, I would like to call attention to the original situation, in which the A.C. was produced, which was historic and dynamic. When the A.C. was presented to Emperor Charles V at the Diet, as he had requested through his edict, the secular authorities who signed the document were a small minority. They almost risked their own lives, their territories and their people. As they stood before the emperor, surrounded by the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, the confessors surely experienced great fear and anguish. Psalm 119:46, which was first quoted by Luther in his letters shortly before and on the very day of the presentation of the A.C., and later printed on its front page, reflects this situation very vividly:

"I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame". We, not only Lutherans but also other Christians here in Asia, who are also a small minority, can understand their situation better than people in the West who can celebrate this jubilee with triumphant processions. We can learn much from the dynamic stance of those who confessed their faith in the situation of 450 years ago. The written and fixed confession (*confessio in statu*) encourages us to learn how to confess the faith dynamically in our own context (*confessio in actu*) by words and deeds. The written confession leads us to live our own faith here and now.

## 2. The C.A. - Given Formula?

For us Lutherans in Asia, the A.C. is a given formula. It was brought to us by missionaries, from either Europe or the USA. It was imported and even imposed on us. The ways in which the missionaries brought it to us differed greatly according to their own attitude to this document. The A.C. has been translated into many Asian languages, second only to Luther's Small Catechism (SC). In Japan, for example, where mission work began in 1892, the SC was translated in 1895, the A.C. in 1900. In those years the SC was used for catechetical teaching and the A.C. for training pastors in the Lutheran doctrines. The Lutheran Confessions represented by these two documents were considered in a sense as a fixed "system of doctrine".

It is important to begin with the recognition that the A.C., together with other confessional documents, is a given formula. But this does not mean that we can neglect these documents, but rather that we have to take them more seriously in our own situation. That which is given should become both the gift (*Gabe*) and the task (*Aufgabe*). And to that end it is inevitably necessary for us Lutherans in Asia to try to understand the A.C. not only in its own historical context but also in our own present-day context. Thus the A.C. does not remain a fixed "system of doctrine", rather we find in it the central theological concern of the Gospel, which was rediscovered by the Reformers.

## 3. The Central Concern of the A.C.

The Roman Catholic Church is a church which lives within a framework. According to its understanding, there are some things which were divinely given and instituted (*iure divino*): the pope, the canon laws, etc. At the end of the medieval era, this framework became so rigid that Luther had to explode it through the Reformation movement based on the rediscovered central message of the Gospel. The Catholics still maintain this framework, but they recognize, and also practice, that they may speak and act more flexibly than before, as long as they remain inside this framework.

Having once exploded that rigid framework, the Lutheran Church after the Reformation, especially in the time of orthodoxy, tried to have a kind of framework of its own within which the A.C. and the Formula of Concord were understood to be an absolutely fixed "system of doctrine".

But the original intention of the Reformers when they wrote these confessional documents was totally different. They had no intention of writing confessions (*confessio in statu*) but tried to confess their faith in given situations with a specific purpose (*confessio in actu*). Some of these acts of confession which in written form later became the Confessions of the church which gradually came to call itself the Lutheran church. Through these confessing acts Lutherans tried to show the central concern of their faith.

Therefore the Lutheran Church is a church which stands on the ever-new message of the Gospel. The A.C. is a document which it confesses and in which is found its central concern: justification by grace alone only for Christ's sake through faith alone. That is, its central concern is christological and soteriological. Therefore, the A.C. must be read and understood and interpreted, not article by article, but as a whole. Each article is closely related to the others. The A.C. as a whole confesses the relationship between God and man. God, who acts in salvation history, is its central concern but this God is not God in isolation but the living God who seeks man in love, who takes the decisive step towards man. God is always decisively active and man is always passive. Melancthon, the author of the A.C., tried to show this central concern in its articles, which are structured to show that the witness, the mission and the life of the church should always reflect this concern in words and action. And this should be true of us today.

When we look at this central concern of the A.C., which is the common treasure of the whole Church, and at the same time ask "What is the Lutheran Church?", we recognize that the more Lutheran the Lutheran Church tries to become, the more it identifies itself as Christian. I would like to illustrate this by using Article 7 of the A.C.

#### 4. Two Marks of the Church - the Third Mark?

There are many important points in Article 7 but here I would like to mention only one. This article and others mention only two marks (*notae*) of the Church - marks which are not powerless symbols, but rather have dynamic potential and power in history: the pure preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments according to the Gospel. The article says clearly that agreement on these two points is enough (*satis est*) for the true unity of the church. We Lutherans cannot and dare not monopolize these two marks. The deeper our understanding of the Gospel becomes and the more we come to a common understanding of the Gospel, the more Lutherans deny their own particularity and the more Christian they become.

Here in Article 7 the third mark of the church is not mentioned. There is no other mark, by which we can recognize or identify ourselves as Lutheran. It could be said that when the Lutheran Church monopolized the A.C. in the course of history, the confession was or at least functioned as its third mark. The Lutheran Church became a "confessional" church. It is very important in ecumenical discussions today, whether a church has the third mark or not, and if it has, whether it holds to this mark or not. Whether we strive

for the true unity of the Church through proclaiming the pure Gospel and administering the Sacraments according to the Gospel or insist on our own third mark is the question. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, has the papacy as its third mark. Similar examples could be drawn from various Protestant churches. Is the Presbyterian system a third mark? Is congregationalism a third mark? Is adult baptism as a sign of faith a third mark? Or the apostolic succession of the bishop in the Anglican Church? In every case, we may ask them whether they hold these points to be divinely instituted (*iure divino*) as a third mark of the church, necessary for its true unity. We Lutherans should ask these questions of other churches in the world today, urge them as the Church of Christ to be consistent with the two marks of the Church, and at the same time be ourselves consistent on this point. In this sense we are not (*non esse*) Lutherans but become (*fieri*) Christians. And we also discuss the A.C. not as a Lutheran Confession but as a Christian Confession of us Lutheran Confessors.

#### 5. The A.C. to be extroverted, not introverted

If we understand the A.C. as a framework, as a system of doctrine of the church, we deal with it centripetally or introvertedly. How to understand the A.C. is a question asked inside the walls of the Lutheran Church. With it we tend to use the A.C. as a sort of court of justice in doctrinal problems or a kind of standard for distinguishing between the orthodox and the heretics.

But if we recognize that the A.C. teaches the central theological concern, we can make full use of this centrifugally or extrovertedly. With the core of the Gospel, we can find the common treasure of the Church. Beginning with this core we can find one after the other points of the Christian tradition which we have in common and then move step by step through patient dialogues and, if possible, joint action to the unity of the churches. We can try to look for the overall meaning of the A.C., asking how each of its articles can be interpreted in the present situation of our church. Basing ourselves on the core of the Gospel, we can cooperate even with non-Christians in certain common tasks in this world.

#### 6. The A.C. in Asia today

As stated above, on this 450th anniversary of the A.C. we are challenged to understand it also in the global context. For us Asians this means our Asian context. It is difficult, or impossible, for me to speak about Asia in general. As one who lives on a far eastern island, I can only say something about Japan or the Japanese, and even this in a fragmentary way.

The question is: How can we make the A.C. dynamic in our own Japanese context? I do not go the way of compromise: the amalgamation of the content of the A.C., on the one hand, and the Japanese mentality, on the other. In this case, confrontation and reinterpretation are both necessary. In the confrontation, certain aspects of the Japanese mentality, thought patterns or way of life, which are totally

alien to the Gospel should be negated. But at the same time, the Japanese mentality could in a sense be a certain guide to an understanding of the Gospel in that we Japanese can take a different approach to the Gospel, one which people in the West may often neglect.

I have emphasized the importance of the christological-soteriological aspect of the A.C.. We Christians should recognize that our religious or pseudo-religious situation in Japan displays both syncretistic and modern anti-religious tendencies. The world in which we live is a world where people make no distinction between god, man and things. There is no fixed boundary between any of these. Each is part of a continuum and can move fluidly from one category to the other, that is from god to man and things, or from things to man and god. The universe is seen as a whole, and each of these concepts flows into and includes the others. Therefore, there is an absence of confrontation, rejection and negation in the true sense. For example, the question of crossing the boundary in the sense of "God becoming man" or "man becoming God" does not arise. Consequently, in this mentality it is totally impossible to believe and conceive of "true God" or "true man", because in the Japanese society the object in each case is a thing, which sometimes becomes man and sometimes becomes god. There is no concept of the absolute of transcendence and "otherness". All transactions between god, man and things occur as part of the natural process, and what is unlikely to occur in the natural process simply cannot occur. This problem arises in various strata of Japanese life, and points to the deep structure of our cultural and religious climate. Evidences of this structure appear abruptly both in the lives of individuals and groups and in the concrete features of national culture and politics. I can mention here national Shintoism and the emperor (tenno) system or cult since the beginning of modernization, on the one hand, and the animistic cult on the local level, on the other.

In the Christian faith, God is totally other in face of man and things; he confronts them and at times rejects and negates them. Man and things cannot transcend the boundary between them and God. The starting point for us Christians is that "only God is God" and we should have no other gods. We confess that only he is our God, and in this way we also let God be God.

Yet this God was not content to be as He was, but became man and came among human beings. In the event of the Incarnation, the boundary which man could not cross was actually transcended. And God did not become a thing, but a man, and thus showed what true humanity is. When man meets the true God who became true man, he is transformed into a new being and comes to know the true God through this true man. Also, in this context man learns what it means to encounter other men as true neighbors. The Christian attempts to be Christ to his neighbor, see Christ in his neighbor, and in this way exemplifies Christian living in the world -- living in commitment and obedience (Nachfolge) to Christ. Therefore in face of the Japanese mentality we confess this Christ alone as our Saviour.



Here we should recognize "justification for the sake of Christ through grace by faith alone" in what concerns and is necessary for our salvation. God alone works for us all to bring us back to a right relationship with him (Allein- und Allwirksamkeit Gottes). In the world, where we traditionally have lived by our own achievements and where, as modern men, we stand on our own achievements in a technical sense, we have to accept that our God alone does all that is necessary for our salvation. It is in this sense that God in Christ confronts us through his Gospel.

But at the same time we have to seek for possibilities to reinterpret the Gospel in our own cultural context. Let me give you some examples of the interaction between the Gospel and our culture. In a world in which we live in interdependence, both as individuals and societies, we can transform this state of dependence into "absolute dependence on God". In a world where we live by the decisions of other people, we can surely find meaning in God's decision for us and live by that. Knowing others, not intellectually but personally, we also come to know God, not through our intellect, our brain, but with our whole heart.

The central concern of the A.C., which is the core of the Gospel, should become manifest and concrete in our church, its life and mission. One of our most urgent tasks is to make our worship service Christian worship which reflects exactly this central concern. Generally speaking, all Asians are worshipping people. Where can we find the decisive difference between our Christian worship and other worship-acts in Asia? One point stands out clearly: while people usually serve their gods through their services, we Christians are served by God through his Word. Benedict of Nursia describes this as "God's work" (opus dei). This idea was almost totally neglected throughout the middle ages, until Luther emphasized that the worship service is from beginning to end God's service to us human beings (Gottesdienst ist Gottes Dienst). Our forms of worship should reflect this fact and at the same time be Asian. God who acts should be confessed and witnessed to by our words and acts, in the sense of God's activeness and human passiveness which is at the same time passive activity. Not we ourselves but God may challenge us in Asia today with his Word, which is always totally new to us and does not return to him empty but accomplishes what he purposes (Is. 55:11).

## THE LIVING GOD AND THE NEW HUMANITY

Won Yong JI

The basic problem of modern man is both theological and anthropological: theological, in the sense that it is involved with man's relations with God and his creation (i.e. nature and human beings); anthropological, in the sense of humanity's own self-understanding, self-expression, and self-awareness. Nearly two decades ago, when the whole world was beginning to experience the revolutionary tornado, the Lutheran World Federation's Helsinki Assembly (IVth, 1963) sought to make the doctrine of justification by grace relevant to the contemporary situation, describing modern man:

The man of today no longer asks, "How can I find a gracious God?" His question is more radical, more elementary. He asks about God as such, "Where is God?" He suffers not from God's wrath but from the impression of His absence; not from sin but from the meaninglessness of his existence; he asks not about a gracious God, but whether God really exists.

This concern still continues, only with an "additional" concern for the meaning of God's presence and his personal care for man. The Lutheran Confessions, the Augsburg Confession (AC) in particular, present in a vivid and relevant manner the core substance of these theological and anthropological concerns of our time.

Following the instruction of the Planning Committee of this symposium, I shall examine the topic, "The Living God and the New Humanity", from two perspectives: from the point of the understanding of the AC, and from the point of its interpretation ("reinterpretation"). The former asks for an accurate perception of the theme in the light of the AC, the norma normata, and the Holy Scripture, the norma normans, while the latter calls for a proper application of the meaning to our own life and its surroundings, our changed situation today as compared with the 16th century as well as with other cultures. The task of "reinterpretation" is always a difficult, and at times risky, one. It requires three interested parties, as Paul Younger, in his book, Hinduism, for western readers, has indicated: "the speakers, the listeners, and what might be called the 'go-betweens'." Mutual empathy, adequate means of communication, and a common point of contact are necessary. At any rate, the task of interpretation can never end. It must continue just as life continues.

As the confessional source for this presentation, we give special attention to the AC, Articles I: God; II: Original Sin; III: The Son of God; IV: Justification. Reference is also made to Articles VI: The New Obedience; XVIII: Freedom of the Will; XIX: The Cause of Sin; XX: Faith and Good Works, and other relevant sections in the Lutheran Confessions. Note is also made of:

Matt. 16:16b: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (emphasis mine).

II Cor. 5:17: "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

and other relevant Bible passages, as occasion arises.

The topic is dealt with in two parts:

The Living God:	The Creation
The New Humanity:	The Re-creation

From the point of methodology, we may conceive of a didactic approach and a pragmatic approach as we examine various aspects of the AC: "didactic" in the sense of "saying" what the Confession had to say; "pragmatic" in the sense of "practicing" what the Confessions say for our day and in our cultural milieu.

As we interpret the topic of this presentation, the central concern is God's activity in history, more specifically, what God has done in his creation, followed by man's deliberate distortion of this; and what God has done in his re-creation and does in his continuing activity today. Both in his promise and its fulfilment, his design and plan, the re-creation took place and is taking place "in Christ". Christians see God's continuing activity in us and for us through Jesus Christ. Thus, we now live a "new life" -- IN CHRIST.

Two concepts in this paper, namely, "living" and "new" have a close affinity -- a dynamic aspect of the reality and its function. These two are to be viewed, theologically, as related to God and man in Christ.

#### PART I: THE LIVING GOD

Article I of the AC sets forth the truth which lies at the basis of all Christian faith. It reflects both the history and theology of the Christian church. The first statement of the Article begins: "We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea,..." It connects us to history. To be faithful to the AC today means to utilize our past creatively for life in the present and the future.

Article I further reads: "...there is one Divine Essence, which is called and which is truly God, and (that) there are three Persons in this one Divine Essence equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit... one Creator and Preserver of all things visible and invisible..." This is, as we know, a statement of the theological tradition of the Christian church in God. The signers of the Confession did not suffer from theological amnesia. (Victim of amnesia: a person who has lost his memory and therefore does not know who he is). They knew their ancestry and honoured it. This is a clear statement of the faith of the Triune God -- the starting point of the evangelical Christian faith, then and now.

#### A. The Living.

As "the living", who has life and power in himself, God is the opposite of all other gods who are lifeless and powerless idols. He sent his Son and thus attested himself to be living, and through his Son Jesus Christ he is the one source and fountain of life for sinful man. He is the one, the only One, who is self-existing, caused by none

(Ex. 3:13-14; Rev. 1:17-18; Jn. 5:58). In connection with this view of God, there were (and still are) many heresies, which are contrary to AC I, and are rejected, viz.: Manichaeism: a view based on Persian dualism combined with Christian and other elements; the Gnosticism of the early centuries; Arianism: which held that the Son was created and was of a different substance from the Father; Eunomianism: an extreme Arianism of the last fourth century; Anti-Trinitarianism as held by the Mohamedans. (1)

In a cross-cultural setting especially, use of the word "God" alone does not guarantee the meaning of the right God, and not of false gods. Language is one of the most important forms of cultural expression. The word "God" for instance, has very different meanings in different cultures. This has been a perennial concern; how can the Gospel as well as the concept of God be so mediated across linguistic barriers that its spirit, its intrinsic meaning, is preserved? There are many gods, many religions. The AC not only urges us to confess the Lord God but also asks us to speak about and to act with the right God, the eternally living One, dynamic and ever living in us and with us in history, in our daily existence, and throughout eternity (Ex. 20:2-3; Deut. 6:4; Is. 45:5; 45:21-22; I Cor 8:4; Eph. 4:4-6).

#### B. God Today

What does it mean to speak about God, to act with God, to believe in God? What is the meaning of God today?

Two points must be made clear at the outset, which may be called the "Word of God in activity":

- God can be understood through all he says about himself in the sacred Scripture;
- he can be understood and described by all he does; his activity in history, in the person's individual life, and in the entire cosmos (Col. 1:15-20).

God is understood:

- as the Triune God (AC I and the ecumenical Creeds);
- as he who is known "in Jesus Christ";
- as he is revealed in the Holy Scripture.

Modern theology presents various alternatives for talking about God. John Reumann presents in his writing on "God's Activity" (2) three such alternatives, as follows, (titles are his):

1. A cosmic view of God: This cosmic model emphasizes the world. the entire cosmos must be the scene of Christ's lordship, not at some future parousia, but now. It further stresses God's sovereignty, set forth in the rule of Christ, now, in the world, as well as in the church. Examples would be from Karl Barth, Joseph Sittler ("cosmic Christology", 1961 WCC New Delhi Assembly) the Barmen Declaration (against the Nazis in 1934), with such biblical passages as Col. 1:15-20; Jn. 3:16; I Jn. 4:9ff.

In spite of certain advantages in the cosmic approach to God and his activity, there are also some problems, for example: the missionary impulse tends to be weakened in specific cases; the cosmic idea of Christ may at times threaten to hide the features of Jesus and become a rather vague force, with the argument running like this: If "Christ figures" can be found everywhere, why bother anchoring Christ "particularly in Jesus"? Pantheism has become pan-Christian; all men may be declared "anonymous Christians" (cf. Carl Rahner, Hans Küng).

It is noteworthy, though abominable, that Mose Durst, the president of the Unification Church (Tong-II-Kyo; "Moonies") in the United States, has said that the members of the Unification Church "believe that Jesus will come again, but we feel he won't necessarily have to return as the same person. He can be someone else" (3) Durst may use a similar argument as the so-called "cosmic approach" to God's activity.

2. An existential view of God and his activity: This approach is content to speak of God only in the individual's existence, not seeing him as "out there" running the universe and especially history. Rudolf Bultmann and his followers were trying to translate into existential terms the biblical meaning of God for men today. Many volumes have been written in support of this view. This approach too has some weaknesses, for example:
  - it is strong on the personal meaning; weak on the corporate, social and cosmic side;
  - it is emphatic on now, but forgetting the past and historical content (e.g. the "historical Jesus");
  - it avoids sin or future-fulfilment aspects.
3. A tradition-history approach: This views history as a vehicle of God's revelation. It is in history, not necessarily excluding nature or the world, that the decisive revelation has occurred; and in tradition, which means holding to the report that "God is alive" and has done this or that. This approach owes much to the development in the 19th century of the historical-critical method. It is also related to a concept of Heilsgeschichte (4) or to today's existentialistic interpretation. The so-called "word-events" (Wortgeschehen, Sprachereignisse) play a significant role. Gerhard Ebeling, Fuchs, and Pannenberg can be mentioned in this connection.

The Lord God in whom we believe and about whom we read in the Bible is the One who is "living" (Matt. 16:16; Matt. 14:33; Jn. 6:51; Mk. 12:27; II Cor. 6:16, etc.) and self-existent (Ex. 3:13-14; Rev. 1:17-18; Jn. 8:58), the only One (Is. 44:6). (5)

- he is universal or cosmic to all creation;
- he is "personal" to each one of us individually;
- he has worked in history and works in the present movement and in the time to come.

Various views and approaches to God in modern theological thinking are interesting and at times helpful. Each of them has something to offer, at least by causing us to think. They are some examples of an analytical approach to a given subject. Each may reveal a certain aspect of the truth but not the total comprehensive picture.

Our biblical and confessional understanding and interpretation of God should by no means be bound to the current vogue or the dictates of the past. In no case should we miss God -- one form of atheism; nor miss our fellow men -- another form of atheism. How can the living and all-powerful One be in tune with human absurdities? We behold the living God in the self-giving suffering God who takes on personal being in love. We experience his care for us as we experience the sufferings of our fellow human beings. Man's theology (understanding of God) and God's anthropology (God's view of man) must be seen in the light of the "suffering Seryant", Jesus Christ. In Christ alone, we know the reality and meaning of God's activity in history and in man. In this phrase, "God... in Jesus Christ", we come to a true grasp of who God is. Our whole life as Christians is centered in it (Ac 17:28; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:1-2, etc.).

#### PART TWO: THE NEW HUMANITY

The primary question here is not, "What must man do?", but "What is God doing?" Here it is God, not man, who takes initiative. God who acts, God who seeks man, whether man seeks him or not. God initiates the "new humanity" (II Cor. 5:17). The idea of man's natural kinship with God and the optimistic religiosity of our day which calls on man to develop his inherent divine potentialities do not stem from the heart of the New Testament. In a time like ours, when secular humanism (s) and henotheistic secularism play a dominant role by moving into the vacuum left as people try to get rid of God and all normative influences of the Christian Gospel, it can be highly important to make a serious examination of man.

To begin with, a "new man" cannot be conceived of without serious consideration of the "old man". We see the "new" vividly in the light of the "old". This requires a reworked newness in the sense of kainos: new in quality, and new and different in character (Lk. 5:38 -- "in new skins"; Acts 17:19 -- "... this new teaching"). This is another way of looking meaningfully at the dictum, simul iustus et peccator. Such a new man lives a life of "new obedience", the fruit of faith. Faith (pistis) and obedience (hupakoe) (Rom. 6:16) are closely connected (CA VI).

The theme of the LWF VIth Assembly in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1977, was "In Christ, a New Community". The Assembly searched for all possible tasks of Christians in our time ranging from mission to Christian responsibility. All were considered to be "in Christ", Christ-oriented activities of the world Lutheran community. That set the tone of the Assembly.

This phrase, "In Christ", (in him, in whom, etc.) occurs some 164 times in Paul's writings. All Christians are united "within the pneumatic Christ" in that they form one body. Christians are connected with Christ, have a direct tie with and are bound to Him. In denotes a vital spiritual connection so that we translate it: "in connection with". This connection is established objectively by the means of grace, subjectively by faith. It applies to every individual believer as such and only thus to all of them as one body. Since each one is connected with Christ, all form one body: "As living creatures in the air, as fish in the water, as plants in the earth; man living and breathing in the air, and the air also being in man." Jn. 15:4. (?) (also cf. Lenski's Commentary on Eph. 1:1.)

To treat the subject of the new humanity, we have to look at the "old man" that is, what man actually is (AC II).

#### A. Man As He Actually Is (AC II)

Man is born in sin, lives in sin, and acts in sin. People on the side of the so-called radical theology or "new morality" may like to avoid this central issue of human existence. However, a true understanding of the Christian faith depends upon the realization of this major premise that all men, without exception, fall short of what they ought to be. AC II was called forth by the superficial conception of sin current in certain circles at that time, for example, in Pelagianism (8), a conception which is still held by the neo-Pelagianists of our time.

1. AC II points out that, as far as our race is concerned, sin is universal. Since the fall, man had a corrupt nature (Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:22; Ps. 51:5; Jn. 3:5-7; Eph. 2:3).
2. Negatively, original sin shows itself in that we have lost. "Without fear of God, without trust in God", there is no faith in him and no love for him. The very power to have faith or to love is lacking. We confess in the words of our catechism, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him" (Rom. 6:7; 1 Cor. 2:14).
3. Affirmatively, original sin shows itself in that we are born with concupiscence, or the inclination to sin. Evil desire has taken the place of holy affections, and selfishness reigns in the heart of natural man. By the fall, man did not lose his personality or cease to be a human being, but he lost the image of God in which he had been created and which constituted his noblest endowment. Instead of the fear and love of God, carnal lust becomes henceforth the motive power of his soul, dominates his whole life, and is the source of all sins (Rom. 3:10-12; Matt. 7:18; Jer. 17:9; Col. 3:5).

AC II asserts that man cannot be justified before God by his own strength and reason. It is hard to imagine anybody in the 16th century believing that men had the power to save themselves. Man's strength and reason, and his ability to cope with life, were not then very impressive. What was only a minor problem in the 16th century, however, has grown into the most important theological problem of our time. We are all tempted to believe that we can save ourselves from ignorance, sickness, hunger, strife, or that we can even defeat death. This is exactly because of our apparent successes in developing our "strength and reason". Nothing, then, is more important to modern men than the humbling realization that they all live after the fall and cannot save themselves. Professor Forell makes this thoughtful remark: "In the 16th century, when people had little power, they could perhaps afford to ignore this fact. Today, just because we have so much power, ignorance of the sinful human situation is not bliss but death." (9)

The view of man as sinner was challenged by Roman theologians of the Council of Trent as presenting only the negative side of man's relation to God. In our day even Reinhold Niebuhr, for instance, spoke of "Lutheran quietism and defeatism" which in order to have positive moral power need to be supplemented from Renaissance sources. But the underlying note is positive and optimistic. It is the optimism, not of naturalism or of idealistic moralism, but the optimism of redemption. It is based on the Good News that the rebellious slave receives a divine gift: true freedom and fellowship with God which he cannot achieve by his own efforts.

#### B. By Christ Alone! (AC III)

Man's life is an "imitation", from birth to death. Each person has his own model. Sometimes this model is called a pattern, a blueprint, a hero, or teacher. Each person, each generation, each land has its own chosen model of life. Christian man chooses Jesus Christ as his model. He tries therefore to follow in the footsteps of Christ. In this sense, he is the true disciple of Christ. In him, man has all in life, not just the way of life, but also his very essence (the renewed essence), his new status (the righteous), his new being (the sanctified), and his new destiny (the hope).

While AC II describes the ruin that man has brought upon himself and the consequent misery and utter helplessness that came to dominate his life, AC III presents to us the clear teaching of the Scripture concerning the mystery of human redemption through the substitution of God's own Son in man's stead. This mystery is set forth in both its execution and its application. This most basic and fundamental doctrine of man's salvation is from the beginning to end the work of God through his incarnation -- God's full participation in man's life and predicament (Jn. 1:1-14; Athanasian Creed).

AC III presents Christology in a nutshell, from his incarnation to his second coming (eschatology), taught in the Holy Scripture and in the ecumenical creeds, and taught by the Christian church throughout the



centuries. AC III asserts God's model for the kind of human beings he wants us to be. The Confession clearly notes that God's clue to the meaning of life is in the Son of Mary "who was truly born, suffered, was crucified, died and was buried", who is God's chosen model for man. This "model", the divinely chosen One, is unique. God's model for man has the power not only to inspire imitation but actually to change those who trust in him. God's becoming man means that not only do we know what a real human being is like, not only do we know what kind of human beings we ought to be, but also how Jesus actively transforms us, if we have faith in him, into the kind of people we are actually designed to be. He enables us to become what he asks us to be if only we trust him.

This article III is particularly important and meaningful in our time, for two reasons:

- Our generation has many more models to choose from than did other ages -- life models, religious models, and religious options in the form of various religious sects.
- People of our time have great power to change themselves through various means and techniques. Humanism is always the basis to such attempts.

The uniqueness of the "Christ-religion" (I Tim. 3:16) is nothing else than Jesus Christ himself. He makes our "faith" distinct from other religions. In a time when "dialogue" attempts among religions are playing an important role and the "theology of religions" is receiving increasing attention, it is necessary to testify to and demonstrate what really constitutes Christianity. For this reason, the Second Article of the Creed calls for our careful and serious study.

#### C. Only by God's Grace (AC IV)

1. This brief statement of faith is so important in the Confession because its content -- the Christocentric doctrine of justification -- is seen by the Reformer as the chief article of faith by which the church stands or falls. It clearly testifies:

- Men (sinners) are justified.
- God alone justifies (he declares and pronounces man just - Rom. 8:33).
- Only on account of Christ!
- A new relationship is established between God and man: only by God's grace, only for Christ's sake, only through faith ("...gratis instificantur propter Christum per fidem") (Rom. 3 and 4; Eph. 2:8-9). Obedience to Christ is the only ground of our justification (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:5; 1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:19).

2. This Article (IV) speaks the unmistakable truth that neither our heredity nor our environment, or, in theological terms, neither our original sin nor our own merit or works determine our destiny, but only God's grace. This is an utterly revolutionary assertion. It actually goes against all our customary religion. The notion that we are saved by our good works is probably the most universally

held belief of man, as in the faith of many non-Christian religions, e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. They hold the view that love is for good people and hate is for bad people. Every human being is self-made. Thus, by being good we can assure ourselves of God's favour towards us. The Karma principle of the Hindu and Buddhist view provides an example.<sup>(10)</sup>

3. What really matters, according to AC IV, is how God loves us. He has shown his love in Jesus Christ. For his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. God's love does this, if we will only let it. God loves all people because he is good, not because we are.

Certainly men can live without God, if they so choose; but without him life will be meaningless and empty: from nowhere, for nothing, and to nowhere. What does life without meaning do for us?

Article IV treats a life-and-death issue, not in an objective and impersonal way. Echoing the Christian existentialism of Luther's coram Deo, the article summons man to stand "before God" and give an account of his whole existence in terms of personal responsibility. Man is not called merely to clarify his idea of God but to face the living God himself. Outside this confrontation he does not know what it means to be a man. AC IV's coram Deo (before God) refers back to AC I; its "homines" (we by ourselves) to AC II; "propter Christum" (for Christ's sake) to AC II; and par fidem (through faith) is defined in AC V.

Justification by grace is God's own answer to the tragedy of the human predicament. It brings God and man together on God's term.

As we know, there have been other answers on man's term in East Asia, for example: the Confucian moralistic ideal man, Chuen-Tzu, in Chinese classical tradition; the Maoists' idealistic vision of a new man which has been under modification and criticism since the death of Mao Tze-tung. For our purpose, all these need serious reflection in the light of the Christian alternative expressed in the Lutheran Confessions.

#### D. New Life in Faith

To have faith means to be born into a new age of life in Christ. Faith is itself an integral part of God's reconciling action, the fulfilment of God's reconciling strategy. The gift of new life created by the Gospel and received by faith is epitomized in the key doctrine of the Confession, justification by grace through faith. Here lies the pivotal importance of AC IV. This teaching of justification is a powerful concept. It is the most significant article of the faith which all

faithful Christians uphold. At a recent meeting, Lutheran theologian George Lindbeck called the doctrine of justification a "meta-theological rule", a norm for all church teachings and life.

Through faith -- the received grace of trusting completely in Jesus Christ -- we make this love of God personally meaningful for us and furthermore make our life worth living. To have faith then is not to do God a favour. It is to do ourselves the greatest favour possible. For without him we are nothing.

Indeed, God has given us all a new start and a new humanity and has thus constituted a new community of his people. In this new existence, we have a new task -- we are sent by our Lord into the world (Jn.20:21; Matt. 28:19f.). When we meet our risen Lord, we gather around him and worship him, and then we are sent out by God to confess his truth, to witness to his work, and to care for his people here and everywhere, "for all time and all time". Indeed, God is there. He cares for us. We as a "new humanity" in Jesus Christ care for God's creation: humanity and nature. As a new creation, we are in a "new movement" of confessing and witnessing to God's redeeming message, and caring for his beautiful creation.

At the end of his recent publication, Theology for the 1980s, (Westminster Press 1980), John Carmody writes:

...the theology of the 1980s ought to take pains over all five of the reality zones, showing how there is a system and connectedness implicit in sustained theological reflection, how all the principal parts are rational. (11)

By "five reality zones" Carmody means: God, Christ, man, society and nature. Indeed, it is important to see and understand these in relational terms, and then in biblical and, especially for us Lutherans, in confession terms.

As we commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Confessio Augustana (and the 400th anniversary of the Book of Concord), in this very significant year 1980, we recall the meaningful statement of Karl Holl made on the 400th anniversary of the Reformation in 1917: "Wir halten keine Totenfeier, wenn wir an Luther gedenken; wir beruehren uns mit einem Lebendigen".(12) Similarly, we would say: as we think about the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, we are not celebrating a birthyear of the dead, but remembering the living. Confessio Augustana always invites us to examine ourselves, our generation and our expectation (hope) by carefully interpreting and reinterpreting it.

"I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame". (Ps.119:46)

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FOOTNOTES - to Dr. Ji's lecture on "The Living God and the New Humanity"

- (1) The term hypostasis in Greek or persona in Latin was also used in the ancient church to repudiate Modalism, which regarded the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three modes of manifestations of the one God.
- (2) John Reumann, "God's Activity", Foundations for Educational Ministry, C. Richard Evenson, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 49ff.
- (3) Religious News Service, 5/27/80.
- (4) Heilsgeschichte: "Salvation history", a term coined in the 18th century and used in the 19th by certain theologians who rejected Schleiermacher's attempt to rest theology upon religious feeling and emphasized the primacy of the biblical historical revelation. Today it is used of two quite opposed theological views, hence the confusion over the meaning of the term:
  - a. Barth and his followers conceive of the events of sacred history, such as incarnation, redemption, etc., as taking place in a supra-historical sphere, inaccessible to secular historical research and known only to faith. (Geschichte) "Historic" events; "What do they mean?"
  - b. Oscar Cullmann and others held that the total history of revelation and salvation is connected with real events in actual history, of which Christ is both the center and the culmination. (Historie) "Historical" events; "Did they happen?"
- (5) See also Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 4 vols., (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Press, 1959), vol. I, p. 447.
- (6) Secular humanism: Thought which considers human interest and development as central and is without religious preconceptions; scientism and materialism without spiritual preoccupation; a humanized religiosity, at the most.
- (7) See also R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962) on Ephesians 1.1.
- (8) Pelagian view: man is not sinful by nature and can be saved by an act of his own will aided by God's grace. The Reformers charged Zwingli and the scholastic theologians with teaching Pelagianism. Modern "humanists" may share this Pelagian view. The old Pelagians may say: man accomplishes his salvation; while the neo-Pelagians may say: man and God together accomplish salvation, a kind of synergism.

- (9) George W. Forell, The Augsburg Confession: A Contemporary Commentary (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968), p. 18.
- (10) Karma: an eternal immutable cosmic law is inescapable. Each thought, act, word, desire has karmic consequences. What you sow, you must reap. The cause-effect principle applied to human life, in the past, present and in the future.
- (11) John Carmody, Theology for the 1980s (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), p. 172.
- (12) Karl Holl, Luther, vol. I in Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), p.1.

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## CHURCH, MINISTRY, AND SACRAMENTS

A Study of the Augsburg Confession (A.C.) in Asian Context  
B.H. Jackayya

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The Augsburg Confession (A.C.) was the most relevant and challenging document for both the Church and the Roman world of the 16th century. It had a great impact on both of them. Now the question before us is: To what extent does this Confession, which spoke to the situation of medieval, feudal Germany, speak to us today in our situation in Asia. It is my conviction that the A.C. can still speak to us today provided we do not simply stay with the words and statements, but go behind and beyond them to the Reformers who wrote the Confession and try to understand their spirit and their theology as far as we can, deeply rooted as we are, of course, in our own context, our problems, our issues, our challenges in mission and ecumenism in Asia today.

How is it that Luther and his Reformation were so relevant and challenging to his day? We learn from Luther biographers and scholars that he was one of the most radical and materialistic theologians. They speak of his frank, open, and decisive dealings with the people, kings and princes, professors and pastors - all born out of his unflinching faith in God's mercy in Jesus Christ and his holy Gospel. The man Luther and his thought were centered not so much in the written Word of God, but in the Holy Spirit who makes Christ present in the living Word. He was therefore not afraid to be sometimes critical of the Bible itself! His dominant ideas for reforming the Church were mainly two.

1. The Gospel of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus should be proclaimed so that it "sounds forth into the whole world" (mission).
2. The Church should remain one in order to carry out an effective ministry through the means of grace.
  - I) The Augsburg Confession
  - II) Beyond the Augsburg Confession to Luther
  - III) Beyond Luther to Modern "Luthers"

### THE CHURCH

#### I. The Augsburg Confession:

- Art. VII: The Church.  
Art. VIII: What is the Church?

1. The A.C.'s basic themes concerning the Church:
  - a. The only Holy Christian Church remains forever.
  - b. A brief definition of what the Church is.
  - c. What is necessary for the unity of the Church.
  - d. The Church is always in need of reformation, because of the presence of sinful and "false" Christians in the Church (Art. VIII).
2. Our reaction to these two articles and the basic themes with which they deal:
  - a. Our first reaction obviously is that they are too brief. They seem to contain precious little on a tremendously vast subject like the Church - a subject of paramount and crucial importance for our Christian faith and life. Just compare this list of topics with all that the Old Testament has to say about Israel, the chosen people of God (Kahal), all that Paul and others have to say about "ekklesia" in the New Testament.
  - b. The Church's essence and function seem to have been defined in terms of personal salvation and edification of the institutional churches.
  - c. The list, at least if taken at face value, seems to be all unrelated to the world, its problems and challenges.
  - d. If one understands the brief definition of the Church in Art. VII as the mere presence of the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments, that may fail to guarantee the reality of what the Church is today. In Asia, particularly, our non-Christian friends would not recognize the Christian Church by the mere presence of the Gospel and Sacraments. In India, for example, the Ramakrishna Mission proudly speaks of the "Gospel of Ramakrishna". They read and hear it regularly. The Hindus have their own Holy Scriptures and Sacraments. So one could agree with Carl Pratten when he points out:  
 "In response to the ecumenical situation today and through reflection on the results of biblical scholarship, we as Lutherans are challenged to ask whether our own definition of the Church in Art. VII of the Augsburg Confession is not too limited. First of all, there is lacking in the definition any reference to the eschatological goal of the church, and second, there is no mention of her essential missionary function in world history. If we are asking about the nature of the church, we cannot omit the fact that it is constituted essentially by its relationships, forward to the kingdom of God and outward to the world. As such it is both a sacrament of the coming kingdom and an instrument for the salvation of mankind." (1)



But we cannot, and should not, stop with the above critical remarks. To understand fully the articles of the A.C. we should be beyond the words to their authors and their situation in the 16th century.

## II. Beyond the A.C. to Luther

First, we are all aware of the fact that the overall purpose in presenting the A.C. at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 was to maintain the unity of the Church, not to bring about a split in the Church. Neither Luther nor his followers wanted to leave the Catholic Church. Their sole aim was to correct some of the abuses and false teachings that they found in the Church as well as in groups like the Anabaptists and others. Their only acute problem with the Catholic Church was: What is the true Church and what creates it? The Anabaptists defined the Church as a purely spiritual fellowship. So this brief statement on the Church was quite adequate for their needs. If their purpose had been to draw up a comprehensive doctrinal statement on Church, Ministry and Sacraments, it would have been quite an easy task for Luther, who, long before 1530, had published several volumes on these and related subjects.

Their burning concern for safeguarding and maintaining the unity of the church led them not to pick up all the little differences of opinion on doctrinal matters and to make a big issue out of them. Willard D. Allbeck speaks a pertinent word to us on this point.

"Avoiding a petty sectarianism, the A.C. bears aloft a majestic affirmation of faith. Even its moderation adds to its strength, for petty polemics signify littleness. Painstakingly prepared and bravely proclaimed, it is a fitting document to lead the faith of the great Reformation." (2)

Let it be emphatically said here that "to recapture the deeper meaning, significance and relevance of the A.C. for mission and ecumenism in our day", we need this virtue of a burning desire for unity that the Reformers possessed in abundant measure.

Another stumbling block that keeps us from getting at the real significance and relevance of the A.C. is the tendency to stick to the letter and form of Luther's statements and the failure to try to discover what exactly was in his person and mind when he approved them. We are readily inclined to follow the meaning put into Luther's words in later centuries. Robert McAfee Brown rightly observes: "Luther rediscovered the vitality of 'faith' as trust in God. Within about a generation, the 'Lutherans' had transformed faith into assenting to certain creeds and doctrines. The freshness gave way to a wooden orthodoxy". (3)

Let us now go to Luther. To try to understand the man Luther and the inner dynamic of his thought is not an easy job. For our purpose here I would like to quote a few statements by Gerhard Ebeling:

"One must always take into account the time at which it was written...All the religious longing and unrest, ecclesiastical problems and abuses, political tensions and upheavals, social discontent and ferment, changes in education and in the understanding of reality, which manifested themselves in a confused form at the end of the Middle Ages, were suddenly voiced and transformed into a unified movement by Luther's words... However cautious we are, we must not forget that these are the words of one who spoke to his own time what it needed to hear, words uttered with the compelling force of what can be uttered in the light of the day, with the liberty of one who is completely absorbed by what he has to say, and with the practicality of one who is hitting the nail right on the head. His word is drawn from the holy scripture and inspired by it alone. (4)

With this little introduction to Luther's person and his thought, we shall now look at our two brief articles of the A.C.

There is doubtless some truth in speaking of the "inadequacy" of the two marks of the Church. However, if only we can understand exactly what Luther meant by the "Gospel" and "Sacraments", we will not find any great inadequacy in the article.

"Gospel", for Luther, is nothing else than the preaching and proclamation of the grace and mercy of God which Jesus Christ has earned and gained for us through his death. It is properly not something written down with letters in a book but more an oral proclamation and a living word: a voice which sounds forth into the whole world and is proclaimed publicly so that we may hear it everywhere. The Gospel is a living proclamation of the Christ who has come. (5)

In our ecumenical age today, five major biblical themes on the nature and function of the Church are brought into focus. They are: the Church as 1) the people of God, 2) the creation and operation of the Holy Spirit, 3) the eschatological community, 4) the body of Christ, and 5) the Servant Church. Although none of these biblical themes is explicitly stated in the A.C., they were very prominent in Luther's thinking, preaching, and writing on the "Church".

Luther from the beginning had the right understanding of what the Church is. With reference to the words in the Creed "the holy Christian Church", Luther in his own pungent way remarks:

"Holy, Christian Church, then, is the same thing as a people that is Christian and holy...in the Old Testament it is called 'God's people'. If these word had been used in the Creed: 'I believe that there is a holy Christian people', it would have been easy to avoid all the misery that has come in with this blind, obscure word 'church'; for the term 'Christian holy people', would have brought along with it, clearly and powerfully, both understanding and the judgment on the question, 'What is and what is not a church?'...Ecclesia, however, ought to mean the holy Christian people, not only for the time of the apostles, who are long since dead, but clear to the end of the world, so that there is always living on earth a Christian, holy people in which Christ lives, works, and reigns per redemption... (Underlinings are mine). (6)

Moreover, Luther understands "Communion" in the sense of community, i.e. congregation. In his treatise concerning "the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ and concerning the Brotherhoods" (1519), Luther wrote: "Whoever is in despair, distressed...let him go joyfully to the sacrament of the altar and lay down his woe in the midst of the community... In this way we are changed into one another and are made into a community by love." (7)

In his confession of 1528, Luther said: "I believe that there is on earth one holy Christian Church, that is the congregation and number or assembly of all Christians in all the world, Christ's own bride and his spiritual body, of which he also is the only head". (8)

That the Church is "the Creation of the Holy Spirit" Luther makes very clear in his well-known interpretation of the Third Article of the Creed: "But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts...gathers, enlightens and sanctifies, etc. (Small Catechism, 1529)

### III. Beyond Luther to Modern "Luthers"

By "modern Luthers" I only mean all those who have a burning desire for the unity of the Church and proclamation of the Gospel.

Modern ecumenical theologians have brought to our notice the following. Properly understood in the context of ecumenism and mission of our day we will have, I believe, no difficulty in agreeing with them:

1. The time of the superiority of Christianity over against other religions and that of the Lutheran Church over against other churches is over.
2. No one can claim that the salvation of mankind lies within the Church. Today we cannot accept "extra ecclesium nulla salus".
3. No church body has the fullness of the Christian truth, let alone the fullness of faith and life.

4. Continuous criticism, renewal, reformation, corrections, and change are absolutely necessary for an authentic Church in today's world.
  5. What we need most in our ecumenical age is an "ecumenical theology". "Ecclesiasticism" and "denominationalism" are still great stumbling blocks to ecumenism. Therefore theological thinking, in its ongoing investigation and critical reflection on the meaning and significance of Christian faith for today, should work towards evolving an ecumenical theology. The Lutheran Confessions, particularly the A.C., will have an important role to play in this ecumenical endeavour. The Common Catechism (see footnote 30) is a joint statement of the Christian faith produced by Catholics and Protestants. "This is a book which points out the road of ecumenism in the future. It seizes on the fundamentals of Christian faith and the urgent questions asked in the modern world". (Editor's Opinion)
  6. Some of Luther's new insights and emphases are either over-emphasized or de-emphasized or given a one-sided emphasis or sometimes even ignored. For example, Luther's "priesthood of all believers", "justification by faith", the three "alones" and the "two kingdom theory" were all increasingly misunderstood after Luther's time. And Luther's doctrine of man in creation (man as God's fellow worker), and his doctrine of Christian vocation are by and large ignored.
1. What are some of the contemporary emphases on the nature, mission and unity of the Church?
- a) The nature and mission of the Church should be understood not only from the point of view of soteriology, but also from that of eschatology. That is, the Church should be understood in the light of God's overall purpose for mankind as stated by Paul in Eph. 1:9-10.
  - b) "It is the very nature of the Church that it has a mission to the whole world. That mission is our participation in the work of God which takes place between the coming of Jesus Christ to inaugurate God's Kingdom on earth and His coming again in glory to bring that Kingdom to its consummation." (9)
  - c) The Church is not an end in itself; it is the servant of the mission of God in the world. For the Reformers, the acute question was, what is the true Church? For us too the church problem has become acute. But for us the question is, as Collin W. Williams says, "How can the church reshape its life so that it is freed for a real encounter with the present secular age... the answer to the church problem at the time of the Reformation can no longer be the answer to our church problem... in our situation the question

becomes one of where the church is. The Church is what the shapes of our obedience must be as we seek to be (Christ's) servant present in the midst of the shapes of need and hope that characterize our age." (10)

- d) In the words of Mathai Zachariah, "The Church should no longer be just a 'gathered community', a 'chosen people' or not even a 'scattered community'; it should be a peoples' movement, helping the community by being its pathfinder...If we are the bearers of the liberating Gospel, nothing less than this is asked of us". (11)
- e) "The Church has no other mission but to be the sign of Jesus Christ here and now, to make present his liberating action in the frustrating situation of our country, by its own involvement in the common struggle of our people for liberation from the unjust and oppressive structures of our society. Its witness demands that like Christ it identify itself with the suffering masses, that it be in solidarity with the concrete situation of the society in which it lives." (12)
- f) A.C.VII on Church unity can still serve as an effective guideline for all ecumenical dialogues. The Gospel and Sacraments, as the essential elements of the nature of the Church, can never be made secondary to human traditions, ceremonies, and rites. This position is generally accepted in all ecumenical dialogues today. Actually about three decades of ecumenical discussions have opened the eyes of the ecumenists to see that organizational unity cannot be the solution to the unity problem. We shall, however, guard ourselves against the misunderstanding that A.C. VII is against traditions and ceremonies.

We should also guard ourselves against another danger - that of considering non-theological and sociological factors as unimportant. In our Church of South India-Lutheran conversations, we Lutherans were led to see the importance of social issues on the faith, life, and ministry of the Church.

- g) With regard to our role as Lutherans in ecumenical endeavours, may I suggest that we still need to learn one important truth. As Hans Küng says, "Unity is a unity of faith, not of theology". (13) I think this is what the Reformers stressed when they said in A.C. VII, "For it is sufficient for the unity of the Church..." Faith cannot be reduced to absolute theological propositions.
- h) Speaking of unity with reference to A.C., I wish to say that Art. VII continues to be a war cry from the Reformers to us to rally round the ecumenical movement and strive for the recognition and demonstration of the one unity all churches have in Christ Jesus.

Moreover, if we believe in "justification by faith", we cannot justify our separate existence by "Lutheran theology" or "Lutheran identity. As the Church of the Reformation and of A.C., we cannot permit organizational and confessional fellowship to take precedence over fellowship in faith. We should never forget that our Christian

fellowship is first and foremost fellowship in Christ Jesus. Only secondarily is it fellowship in the Confessions. This fellowship in Christ Jesus transcends all racial, national, denominational, and confessional differences, boundaries and identities. At the same time no Church need lose any of its essential identity in any union.

Another important point that the ecumenical movement has brought to our notice is "Secular Ecumenism: One Church - One World". Michael Rogness in his article on this subject says, "Secular ecumenism is the hand-writing on the wall". (14)

### MINISTRY

#### I. The Augsburg Confession

A.C. V: The Office of the Ministry.

A.C. XIV: Order in the Church.

Art. V on The Office of the Ministry begins with the words, "To obtain such faith". This article is, therefore, a continuation of Art. IV on Justification. Its main point is, "How the justifying faith is obtained". The Zwickau prophets and some others said that such a faith can be obtained directly by the "inner voice" of the Holy Spirit. They actually quoted Luther's early writings in support of their enthusiasm for the "inner voice". Hans Küng says that the 'enthusiasts' forced Luther after 1525 to secure his defence on this side and to moderate some of his originally radical position. (15)

#### 1. Basic themes of these Articles:

- a. The office of the ministry is for the purpose of creating justifying faith through the preaching of the Gospel and administering the Sacraments.
- b. It is the Holy Spirit who works such a faith through the Gospel.
- c. But no one should preach or teach or administer Sacraments without a call.

These are very basic scriptural themes which need to be taught and emphasized even today. Generally speaking, however, the questions of order and a regular called ministry in the Church are not subjects of any great controversy in either the Catholic or Protestant church today.

The title "office of the ministry" is often liable to be greatly misunderstood. The New Testament ministry is not of an "office" but primarily of service. The Christian minister is the servant of the Servant Lord and the Servant Church.

One problem that has persisted and plagued the Church from medieval times is "clericalism and clergy domination". The minister very often considers himself as the official with worldly power, authority, prestige, and high dignity. "Ordination", which is the Church's heritage from early times and which is truly "ordination for service" is considered to confer special authority and privilege. Article XIV, which says, "nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer sacraments in the church without a regular call" is very often understood in too literal a sense, with the result that if there is no ordained minister the "community of believers" is even deprived of the Holy Communion. Especially in our Asian countries where an ordained minister has 10, 15, 20 congregations to look after, Holy Communion is not celebrated for months at a time. As Hans Küng remarks, "Luther's great theme, 'The priesthood of all believers', remains more often in theory than in actual practice. It is a negative slogan without its positive significance". (16)

Another problem we face with regard to "ordination" as practised in our Lutheran churches is that the one ordained becomes committed to showing allegiance to the "polemically" oriented Lutheran Confessions of the 16th century. Lutheran Confessions themselves do not demand an unqualified submission to them.

There is yet another difficulty with the major themes of these two articles on ministry. They all seem to lay most stress on the "priestly" ministry of a minister.

Luther would throw more light on some of these difficulties and questions if not all.

## II. Beyond the A.C. to Luther

### 1. Ministry and "priesthood of all believers"

"...as many of us as have been baptised are all priests without distinction...For thus it is written in I Peter ii, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a priestly kingdom.' Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us, who do all that they do in our name. And the priesthood is nothing but a ministry, as we learn from I-Corinthians iv, 'Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.'" (17)

"A true pastor...serves men in body and soul, in property and honor. See now how he serves God and what a glorious sacrifice, or service, he renders; for by his work and his word the kingdom of God is maintained in the world; so, too, are kept the Name and the honor and the glory of God, the true knowledge of God..." (18)

In the above quotations from Luther we find the importance he gives to the "priesthood of all believers". Properly understood, this Reformation emphasis is very much needed even today. The ministry belongs to the whole Church. It is true that there are special ministries to which specially trained and qualified persons are called. But the Church's ministry as such belongs to the whole Church, and it is the Church that calls people for special ministries which are carried out on behalf of the whole Church. However, as has already been noted, this teaching of Luther of "the priesthood of all believers" has often been misunderstood by his followers.

Some of the misunderstandings may be cleared up when we see what Luther has more to say on the dynamic nature of Christian ministry under Baptism and Sacraments. There seems to be some contradiction in what he says about "who could consecrate and celebrate the Holy Communion". At one time he says very strongly that no one who is not ordained should consecrate the Holy Supper. But elsewhere he has said: "The third function is to consecrate or to administer the sacred bread and wine...We hold that this function, too, like the priesthood, belongs to all, and this we assert, not on our own authority, but that of Christ (Luke 22:19; I Cor. 11:24)".

The Church's ministry today has more dimensions than it had during Luther's time. Yet Luther was not unaware of these dimensions. As a matter of fact, in some instances he even goes far beyond what modern reformers have brought to our notice. We shall, however, include that in the next section, since it is the modern ecumenical scholars who have rediscovered Luther for us today.

### III. Beyond Luther to Modern "Luthers"

"A Study Guide on the Theology of the A.C. in the Indian Context" lists the following "Issues in Mission under Ministry":

1. "The ministry of the church is inseparable from its mission in the world. The purpose of the ministry is to equip God's saints for their work of ministry (Eph. 4:12). Every administration of Word and Sacrament is to be carried out for the sake of mission. A ministry which does not lead to mission is a tree which does not bear fruit. (cf. Mt. 7:15-20; Jn. 15:1-8).
2. The pattern for the church's ministry will be that of Christ's ministry. Jesus moved among people of all levels of society. He met social and spiritual needs. He expected persecution for righteousness' sake. He was led by the Spirit, devoted to the Father's will and trusting fully in His Father's care.
3. The priesthood of all believers is the primary mission arm of the church's ministry. God's people at work in all parts of society are His agents of redemptive love, His spokesmen of Law and Gospel, His 'sacraments' of spiritual power.



The purpose of the pastoral ministry in the church is the lay ministry outside the church.

4. The ministry of the church has a prophetic calling in society. We are to speak God's word of judgment and hope in all social affairs, both within the church and outside. As the prophets of politically insignificant Israel spoke God's word to the nations, so are we to declare His will boldly and clearly though we are a small political minority. God's Word has its own power and authority." (19)

T.W. Manson writing on "Ministry and Priesthood" says:

"The ministry of Jesus is the standard and pattern of the Church's task; but, more than that, the Church's task is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus. All our ecclesiastical designs are to be tested against the master plan depict in the gospel. All our endeavours are to be understood as ways in which the Risen Lord continues his work in the world... The priesthood of believers means each believer offering his own body: it also means Christ the high-priest offering his body, the Church. These two aspects...cannot be separated in fact." (20)

Another emphasis given in modern times to Christian ministry is that ministry must be devoted to the building up of the congregation. Luther's passionate concern for the gathered congregation and its corporate life has been rediscovered today. It is very often said that Luther was a man of individualism. John T. McNeill proves adequately that it is not so:

"The element of communion is paramount (in Luther's thinking.) ... Communion was for (his) fraught with ethical content. It involved a high degree of corporate consciousness, a group solidarity, and the recognition of an obligation mutually to bestow religious benefits and render social services. The sanctity and centrality of communion were strongly felt and asserted in Lutheranism". (21)

In the introduction to one of Jürgen Moltmann's most recent books M. Douglas Meeks has something very interesting to tell about what the Reformation originally envisioned as

"the congregated people of God": "During the last 450 years the Protestant churches have nearly destroyed one of the principal realities at which the Reformation was arriving, namely the congregation... Our churches have become bureaucratic, vertical in organization, overly clerical in identity, planned and directed 'from above'... The maturation of the congregation is still the unfinished work of the Reformation". (Underlining mine) (22)

But why speak of a congregation under the church's ministry? According to Luther, the congregation is the Church in the local place.

The congregation is not merely a part of the whole Church or merely a branch of a denominational Church body. The Church's ministry is the ministry of the congregation.

## 1. The traditional pattern of our ministry today

The traditional threefold ministry is the ministry of Word and Sacraments, the ministry of proclamation, and the ministry of service. The ministry of Word and Sacraments is the pastor's main concern. The members of the congregation are the object of this ministry. The ministry of proclamation is normally a weekly or bi-weekly or even monthly program of the work of the pastor. This is supposed to be the mission of the Church. Mission is evangelism. And evangelism is adding people to the church. The church is the Lutheran or the Church of South India or the Roman Catholic or the Pentocostal church. The main concern is the expansion of the denominational churches. How sad Luther would be if he were alive today to see the one church divided into hundreds of denominational churches after the Reformation, and each carrying out the mission and ministry around itself: "The ministry of service consists in medical, educational, and social service. Now project-oriented development work is being added. The ministry is directed mainly to our own church people in the rural or urban areas. Non-Christians, even other Christians, are generally considered as objects for conversion or as potential members of our church.

Our ministry is therefore very unrelated to the society and its religious, cultural, and political context. Emphasis is usually given to the salvation of individual "souls", but the salvation and solidarity of the whole community of Christians and of the whole village community go more or less unemphasized.

## 2. The ministry of Jesus

Jesus' ministry consisted mainly of preaching, healing, and teaching of, and compassionate dealings with individuals and groups of people. But these were not independent acts. They were all part of the one dominant and central teaching about the kingdom of God (Mk 1:15). His concern was not so much the temple service, sacrifices, offerings and festivals, as the people, suffering people (Matt. 9:36; Lk 4:16-20). The pity is that we have simply and blindly spiritualized Jesus' ministry. Edward Schillebeeckx is quite right in saying,

"The church has for centuries devoted her attention to formulating truths and meanwhile did almost nothing to better the world. In other words, the Church focused on orthodoxy and left orthopraxis in the hands of non-members and non-believers". (23)

In preaching the kingdom of God, Jesus founded a new community. He trained his disciples in community living. Read the sermon on the Mount. Read also Matt. 19:16-25; Lk. 16:19-31; Mk. 7:1-13, etc. about the new community during the apostles time.

Our work today is to continue Jesus' work, namely, building and edification of a new community.

"As the Father has sent me, even so I send you"(John 20:21). Our work is not to preach with the sole goal of influencing individual behaviour but also of creating a new community which would act corporately to expand its influence among all people and move toward the consummation of the kingdom of God by being a serving, sharing, and suffering community. The creation and expansion of this new community is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit in the community. It is a rebirth brought about in every individual who makes up the community. It is not merely human work.

### 3. The role of the pastor

The pastor's primary role and task therefore is to be a community builder. His call is to make his congregation a catalytic community so that it can fulfil its mission of functioning as priest of God to the world. He is an equipper and animator of the "saints". He is a man for others. His vocation is one of being present among people in their aspirations, problems, and difficulties. The ministry of reconciliation (Cor. 5:18-21) is the ministry of the whole Church. As John Macquarrie says, it is "the ministry of responding to those in need and without this any other kind of ministry is empty". (24)

In the light of this, then, all the varied ministries of the pastor (ministry of worship, sacraments, preaching, teaching, counseling, etc.) must serve this purpose and be directed to achieving this goal.

The congregation should be the subject, not the object, of Christian ministry.

## SACRAMENTS

### I. The Augsburg Confession:

- A.C. IX: Baptism
- X: The Holy Supper of our Lord
- XIII: The Use of the Sacraments
- XXII: Both kinds in the Sacrament
- XXIV: The Mass.

#### 1. A.C.'s major themes concerning the Sacraments:

- a. A.C. IX: Baptism:
  - i. Baptism is necessary for salvation.
  - ii. Children should be baptized.

b. A.C. X: The Holy Supper of our Lord

- i. Real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's supper.

c. A.C. XIII: The Use of the Sacraments

- i. They are signs for identification of Christians and of God's will towards us.
- ii. God's will is to strengthen our faith.
- iii. They should therefore be received in faith.

Arts. IX and X are mainly against the Baptists and the Zwinglians and Arts. XXII and XXIV are mainly against the abuses found in the Catholic Church. The Baptists denied infant baptism. The Zwinglians and others denied the real presence and gave a purely symbolic interpretation of the Eucharist. While pointing out the abuses found in the Catholic Church, the articles once again reiterate that Lutherans have not departed from the faith of the Catholic Church.

In these articles the A.C. touches upon some basic doctrinal points regarding the sacraments. They are of paramount importance for the faith and life of the people of God. The churches should continue to study and discuss them. But our purpose here is not to take up the issues that faced the Reformers in the 16th century. First of all, neither the Catholic Church nor the followers of Zwingli and others are the same as they were in the 16th century. The ecumenical movement has brought all churches closer to each other for fellowship and the study of Christian doctrines. It is indeed a matter for thanksgiving to God that nearly two decades of ecumenical dialogue between the various churches, (the CSI - Lutheran - Reformed, and others) have resulted in a good measure of common understanding on major doctrinal issues as the various Agreed Statements and common reports clearly show. It is true that there is not yet complete agreement on every doctrinal point. There may still be some knotty problems to solve. But it is amazing how much they have been able to agree upon. Space does not permit us to quote some of the Agreed Statements on the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. We must simply recognize that the Holy Spirit has been guiding these many bilateral and multilateral dialogues that are going on today and that he will continue to guide them into all truth and full truth.

Secondly, we are facing new issues today, especially issues concerning mission and ecumenism. The Gurukul Study Guide on the A.C. has listed several such issues.

In light of the above, it is only proper that we recognize the mutual understanding and friendliness that God has granted to the churches and therefore cease to be simply polemical in our approach to other churches.

There are a number of common issues that face all the churches around the world which, in the words of Daniel F. Martensen, "are engaged in an ongoing struggle to clarify mission goals, to relate visions of the unity of the Church to the crying needs of a divided humanity, and in some instances, so survive at all". (25) Because of lack of time I can deal briefly with only three of them:

1. The social significance of the Sacraments
2. The non-baptized believers in Christ
3. Inter-communion

## II. Beyond the A.C. to Luther

### 1. The social significance of the Sacraments:

Word and Sacraments were subjects of great vital importance to Luther. Writing, speaking, and debating on these subjects consumed much of his time and energy during his career as reformer. As Theodore Bachmann, editor of Luther's Works (Muhlenberg Press, 1960), points out in his Introduction to Vol. 35, p. XI, from 1519 to 1544, less than two years before his death he wrote several volumes on these subjects. All of them have not yet even been translated into English. For Luther "the Word and Sacraments" comprise the life-giving center and power not only for the individual believer but also for the corporate church.

### 2. Baptism

We are all familiar with what Luther says about the Sacraments in his Small Catechism. In connection with our question about the social significance of Baptism, we are all well aware of Luther's answer to the question: "What does baptizing with water signify?"

### 3. Lord's Supper

Similarly with the Lord's supper, we quote some relevant excerpts from Luther.

"The significance or purpose of this sacrament is the fellowship of all saints, whence it derives its common name s y n a x i s or c o m m u n i o, that is, fellowship; and c o m m u n i c a r e means to take part in this fellowship, or as we say, to go to the sacrament, because Christ and all saints are one spiritual body, just as the inhabitants of a city are one community and body, each citizen being a member of the other and a member of the entire city. All the saints, therefore, are of Christ and of the Church, which is a spiritual and eternal city of God, and whoever is taken into this city is said to be received into the community of saints, and to be incorporated into Christ's spiritual body and made a member of Him". (26)

"As oft as ye do this, remember Me"... it is necessary and profitable for us to remember Him; whereby we are strengthened in faith, confirmed in hope and made ardent in love. For as long as we live on earth our lot is such that the evil spirit and all the world assail us with joy and sorrow, to extinguish our love for Christ, to blot out our faith, and to weaken our hope. Wherefore we sorely need this sacrament, in which we may gain new strength when we have grown weak, and may daily exercise ourselves unto the strengthening and uplifting of the spirit..." (27)

"Finally, the blessing of this sacrament is fellowship and love, by which we are strengthened against death and all evil. This fellowship is twofold: on the one hand we partake of Christ and all saints, on the other hand we permit all Christians to be partakers of us, in whatever way they and we are able; so that by this sacrament all self-seeking love is uprooted and gives place to love which seeks the common good of all, and through this mutual love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community, - that is the true union of Christian brethren".(28)

What Luther says about the significance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper has a very clear-cut social significance. But the problem with us Lutherans is that we have understood Luther's words more in a spiritual sense and more as referring to the individual believer's salvation and life in the world. But Baptism is never an individual affair. By baptism one becomes a member of the community of believers who are called to serve all nations and people. We have failed to relate Baptism and the Lord's Supper to the whole community, society, and world. However, thanks to the modern ecumenical movement and Luther scholars, theologians, and biblical exegetes, our eyes have now been opened to see how "materialistic" and "social-minded" Luther was already when he wrote the Small and Large Catechisms.

### III. Beyond Luther to Modern "Luthers"

Luther, along with St. Paul in Rom. 6, brings out powerfully the social meaning of "dying and rising with Christ" in Baptism. The Baptism which we receive once in our childhood is a daily reminder to us that sin and death should be killed and that we should rise to new life. The sin with which we have to fight daily has a great social dimension. Sin, according to St. Paul (Rom. 5:21; 6:12; 3:9; 19:23; 2:25; 12, 13, etc.), is a power that rules the world. All men are under this power. And it is a demonic power. To fight against this power means to fight against all demonic powers like human selfishness, the exploitation and oppression of man by man, of society by society.

Walter Altmann rightly points out that "Lutheranism means neither introversion nor accommodation", and therefore Luther could be expressing a judgment on the Protestant Church when he said, "But take a look at your own life if you do not find yourself among the needy and poor as the Gospel of Christ proclaims. You must know that your faith is not true and that you have certainly not yet tasted the benefits and work of Christ himself". (29)

It was Augustine who first introduced the word "Sacraments" as we know it today. It is said that the African Church Father, Tertullian (3rd century) used the word "Sacraments", in the sense of an oath of enlistment, with reference to baptism. According to him, a candidate for baptism promises to dedicate himself to the service of Christ just as a soldier pledges himself to the service of his emperor" (30)

The Lord's Supper is a community affair. The whole congregation gathers and celebrates the Holy Communion. It brings to their memory the whole life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ on the cross. But receiving the body and blood of Christ not only brings to memory what happened two thousand years ago but brings Christ himself to live with us. The Holy Supper also points us to the "heavenly banquet" at the consummation of the kingdom of God when there will be a perfected community of peace and love.

Choan-Seng Song explains the Lord's Supper as "the visible expression of God's saving love for the world...The healing of bodily disorder, restoration of broken relationships, elimination of social injustice, working for peace among men, in a word, becoming the witness to the reality of God in the world, are all literally the sacraments of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper therefore is an action and not a ceremony". (31)

Finally, we would like to add a warning here that while emphasizing the social aspects of the Sacraments we should not water down their spiritual aspects. But actually they are not two entirely different things, but the two sides of the same coin.

#### 1. The non-baptized believers in Christ:

This question was raised and discussed at a special "Workshop on the Augsburg Confession" conducted at Gurukul Theological College and Reserach Center, Madras in 1979. The following two issues were stated for further study:

##### a. Issue in the Church

"Baptism brings one into the spiritual fellowship of the Church. In many of our communities baptism thus has a sociological dimension of entering a social fellowship. The effect often is that the church is viewed for social purposes primarily and the Christian community viewed

by others as a separate sociological entity. When baptism has become entrance into a self-serving sociological community, it is once again like the circumcision which the Old Testament prophets condemned.

b. Issue in Mission

"The place of baptism in relation to faith, life in Christ, and the Church must be worked out theologically in terms of the question of non-baptized believers in Christ. Faith alone saves and brings one to life in Christ, but baptism brings one into the church". (32)

These two issues were raised because there are innumerable men and women in other religions in India, especially in Hinduism and Islam, who are real believers in Christ Jesus, but who for various reasons, perhaps mainly sociological and cultural, reject Baptism and do not wish to be identified with any church.

This question of non-baptized believers is related to two other questions: 1) Is baptism necessary for salvation? 2) Does the Holy Spirit work only through the Church, the Word, and Sacraments? On both of these questions our Confessions make definite assertions:

A.C. IX: "It is taught among us that Baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it". The Latin version, as found in Triglotta, adds the words "for salvation".

Book of Concord: "God will not deal with us except through his external word and Sacraments " (Tappert, p. 318)

It is generally accepted among Lutherans today that, in spite of these assertions of our Confessions, Baptism is not absolutely necessary for salvation and that we should not put any limitations on how the Holy Spirit works faith and salvation. The Vatican II document, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", WCC publications on dialogue with people of other faiths and other biblically based ecumenical studies on non-Christian religions have sufficiently revealed the undeniable fact that the Holy Spirit normally works through the Word and Sacraments, we do not necessarily say that he does not work otherwise in the world. There is ample evidence in both the Old and New Testament that God has been encountering people also "directly" in some way. People under the "Old Covenant" did not have the Word and the Sacraments as we understand them today. We also know that the Church Fathers had an open mind on this question. "Augustine, dealing with other religions", as Paul Tillich points out, "was dialectical, as was that of his predecessors. They did not reject him unambiguously and, of course,



they did not accept them unambiguously. But in their apologetic writings they acknowledged the preparatory character of these religions". (33)

I would like in this connection to draw your attention to a very interesting and instructive correspondence of M.M. Thomas with Bishop Newbigin, the Rev. Alfred Krass, and Dr. Paul Loeffler on "Baptism, The Church and Koinonia". (34)

The Common Catechism has something very relevant to say here:

"There is one last lesson to learn from 'justification by faith alone', and that is a deep respect for all that is human. This includes respect for religion as an expression of human nature. That respect has its foundation in the fact that God loves men without conditions. Far from being in conflict with a correctly understood claim for the superiority of Christianity, it follows from it. Absolute claims can be made only by God's love, not by its human interpretation or embodiment. And it is the very absoluteness of God's love, directed to all men in all circumstances, which gives rise to this deep respect for what is human, because it is loved by God. This realization should also guide us in our dealings with the representatives of other religions". (35)

## 2. Intercommunion:

Intercommunion has not until recently been a very serious question for us Lutherans since we were very used to "close communion". But the ecumenical movement has brought this matter to the fore as a challenge to all those churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Orthodox) which have now begun to grow in mutual understanding and common mind on some of the central teachings of the Christian faith, and which worship and pray together at the Lord's table. Generally speaking Lutheran churches now have an open mind on this question. There are, of course, a few Lutheran churches which continue to practise "close communion" in relation not only to non-Lutheran churches, but strangely enough, also to the so-called "Lutheran errorists".

The Roman Catholic Church has no objection to intercommunion with the Eastern Orthodox churches, but with other churches it is not yet ready for intercommunion. (See Vatican II Document on "The Practice of Ecumenism"). (36)

All those who are against intercommunion hold that the Lord's Supper is the "expression" of unity; others hold that it is a means to unity.

Bishop Newbigin, who took a very active part in the CSI-Lutheran discussions, in one meeting reminded the Lutheran

participants of the doctrine of justification by faith and said: "The Lord wishes to bring unity not by our works, church rules and regulations, but by faith - faith in the one spirit who wills to bring unity not by our merits, but by the sheer grace of God".

Jürgen Moltmann makes a very good case for intercommunion when he says:

"Because this fellowship comes into being on the basis of Christ's unconditional and prevenient invitation, the fellowship will be an open one. It cannot limit Christ's invitation on its own account. Everyone can participate who wants to participate in the fellowship of Christ. The communion is the answer to Christ's open invitation. Talk about the 'inter-communion' of Christians belonging to different churches and denominations is misleading if it draws away attention from communion with Christ. What this means is obvious on the basis of Christ's invitation to everyone. The traditionally varying interpretations of the Lord's Supper can only be clarified when we all follow Christ's open invitation together. The contradictions can be solved through a common practice, because then they have to be solved". (37)

The Eucharist, as "the Sacrament of suffering and victori love", is powerful enough to bring all those who are separated from each other into one fellowship and one unity in spite of their differences in doctrine and practice. Jesus Christ is the only foundation for true fellowship.

#### CONCLUSION

I would like to close this paper with an appeal to our Asian churches. How seriously are we taking this question of the unity of the churches and the unity of all mankind? How clearly are we following the many activities of the L.W.F. and W.C.C.? How much interest are our churches showing in them? Some of the L.W.F. reports show that, for example, we have not so far sufficiently responded to the many ecumenical dialogues that the LWF is carrying on. This situation must change. It is high time that we Asian Lutherans try to come out of our isolation and actively participate in all ecumenical theological studies and other ecumenical efforts of the L.W.F. and W.C.C. within and outside Asia. The crying need of the hour is for a united Church, an ecumenical ministry, and intercommunion.

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FOOTNOTES - to Dr. B.H. Jackayya's lecture on "Church,  
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## THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

S.M. Hutagalung

### Introduction

The chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Luther Studies Symposium requested that this lecture reflect a proper understanding of the CA (Confessio Augustana) as well as provide a reinterpretation in the speakers own contextual situation. I would like to point out from the beginning that I myself and perhaps many Lutherans of Asia (and also Africa and Latin America) are faced with many obstacles in coming to a clear and precise interpretation of the CA. There is first the time gap between the "church in the world" of the 16th century and our "church in the world" of the 20th century. More important still is the big socio-political gap. Asian Christians (apart from those in the Philippines in which Roman Catholicism is a major religion) live as minority groups in a cultural, religious, and political setting which is quite different from the "Christian" Europe of the 16th century. Our present Asian churches are strangers to such heretics as Manichaeans, Valentinians, Eunomians, etc. mentioned in the CA.

Moreover, for a proper understanding of the CA, the other books or symbols of the Book of Concord, especially the Apology, are necessary, together with an understanding of Luther's theology; but the Book of Concord as a whole has not yet been translated into any of the Asian national languages. Thus we encounter a vast array of difficulties.

One should, however, not forget that although the CA is central to the confession of faith, it stands always subordinate to the Scriptures as the supreme norm and authority of the Confessions. Thus the CA, as an historic document of the teaching of the Lutheran churches, does not, and should not, exclude developments based upon biblical insight and interpretation within Lutheran churches in Asia. Even though the CA implies that it is a sufficient statement of Christian faith, it makes and should make no claim to be perfect and final or an exhaustive statement of faith for all Lutheran churches in the world.

New theological and exegetical insights and new encounters with rapidly changing ideologies, values, science, and technology in our present world make amendments in the CA or other formulations possible and sometimes even necessary. But changes should never be attempted without prior wrestling with and study of the CA. It is in line with our Lutheran heritage that the CA should be studied, preached, and heard by Lutheran congregations, and this task has only been carried out sporadically within the Lutheran churches of Asia.

It is also important that there be first a deeper self-understanding and self-examination of our inner-Lutheran unity as churches. How far is there already full doctrinal unity, or inter-pulpit fellowship and intercommunion within the Lutheran churches of Asia? How far do we and can we manifest a united, clear, prophetic voice and action in the world of our local, national, and international contexts? Our difficulty in trying, for example, "to state correctly what the church is", may lie precisely in the fact that,

according to Luther, even "a seven-year-old child knows what the church is"; (1) but at the same time we see that during the 450 years since the CA, there has been so much theological research, writing and argument in the attempt to formulate a clear concept of the church especially in its relation to the world.

With regard to a reinterpretation of the CA in my own contextual situation, the Batak Church Confession of Faith (B.Ch.C. - 1951) will be taken into account, but other situations in Asia will also be considered.

### I. The Concept of the Church in the CA

In the quest for the right understanding of the church according to the CA, articles VII and VIII are central, although these are not the only ones related to this subject. In these two articles, however, the basic nature of "the church" (art. VII) and "what the church is" (art. VIII) are pointed out.

In article VII, we read "that the holy Christian church will be and remain forever". (2) This expresses the conviction of the Reformation that the church, based on Christ, the Word of God, will not pass away (Matt. 24-25; Matt. 28:20). It also wants to stress that the Reformation was not aimed at the founding of a new church, but that the struggle for the renewal of the church is based upon the right understanding of the Word of God and that it remains the "one holy Christian church". Thus the first sentence of article VII wants to stress both the continuity and the apostolicity of the church for as long as this world exists. The apostolicity of the church is the continuity of the church in the past, present, and future, based upon the apostolic doctrine and teaching in the Scriptures. The one holy Christian church is "the assembly, gathering or congregation of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel". With regard to the word "holy", part III, article XII of the Smalcald Articles (The Church) stated that the holiness consists of "the Word of God and true faith". The assembly of all believers and saints or the communio sanctorum can also be understood as both the communio in the sancta, i.e. the Sacraments, and with the more personal meaning, the communio of the sancti, i.e. the assembly of those who have been sanctified or justified, which is dominant in Luther and the CA. (3) The saints are not only the deceased but also the believers here in the world, in the congregations. The assembly of the believers is in the first place also here in the world, among the living. (4) This "congregation", the assembly, is realized here in this world. It is interesting to note the explanation of the Batak Church Confession which states in article 8 point B that "the Church is called holy, not because of the holiness of its members, but because of the holiness of Christ, its Head".

That the Gospel is taught purely and the Sacraments administered rightly is basic for the nature and function of the church. The gathering or assembly of believers as a church cannot exist without the Gospel and Sacraments. Thus the church is in the first place the bearer of the

## Gospel and administrator of the Sacraments.

The assembly of "koinonia" or fellowship is for the CA not just a sociological entity but foremost a theological and pneumatological entity. It is neither institutions nor even theology which constitute the church but rather and primarily people who have faith in Christ. The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like civic governments but is mainly an association born of God's action, who gave the Gospel, incarnate in Christ, and sent the Holy Spirit who renews, consecrates, and governs "a spiritual people... God's true people, reborn by the Holy Spirit" (Apology VII/14). One can say "where Jesus is, there is one holy universal church".

2. The basic marks of the church are in the true preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments according to the Gospel. They are the evidences by which a believer can determine the existence of the church in any given community. True preaching is the preaching of justifying grace in Christ received through faith (CA IV). It is not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ that God justifies those who believe, that they are received into favour for Christ's sake (CA V/3).

The CA does not directly specify or stress the character of persons in the community or gathering, but takes up first the basic character of the gathering. The church as the assembly of believers is that particular gathering where the Gospel is the binding and uniting force, received in faith. Faith is active in producing good works, and "if good works do not follow, our faith is false and not true". (5) This is of extreme importance for the Asian context with its religious-spiritual concept of "good works", meriting blessing and the favour of God(s).

The two marks of the church are explicitly stated in CA VII and also implicitly stressed in CA V/1 with regard to "The Office of the Ministry", in CA XIV with regard to "Order in the Church", and in CA XXVIII/8 related to "The Power of Bishops". In the last article the "power of keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments". It is common for Lutheran churches to mention that there are only two Sacraments (see for example the B.C.H.C. article 10), but this is not directly specified in the CA.

That the Gospel or the Word of God is the binding norm or ultimate authority can be seen even in the fact that the Sacraments should be administered according to the Gospel (CA VII). The Holy Spirit "works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel" (CA V/2). It is "the teaching about faith in Christ" (CA XV/3; XX/10f.; XXVI/20). The Large Catechism (LC) explaining the third article of the Apostles' Creed states that nobody could "know anything of Christ or believe in him as our Lord, unless these were first offered to us and bestowed in our hearts through the preaching of the Gospel..." (6) "For Christ's sake it offers forgiveness of sins and justification, which are received by faith" (Apology IV/62). The Sacraments appear



as the visible Word, the acting-out form of the Gospel. The B.Ch.C. (article 10) mentions the Sacraments as "visible signs of His (God's) grace", and his is in conformity with the explanation of the CA in Apology XXIV/69-70 where the Sacraments are called sign, witness, and seal of divine grace.

3. In light of the above, it is no surprise that CA VII makes the well-known statement about what is sufficient (satis est) for the true unity of the church and that it is not necessary (nec necessare est) for the true unity of the church that it be in conformity with ceremonies instituted by men. What is being pointed out here once more is that, for the true unity of the church, the preaching of the Gospel in its purity and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the divine Word are not only sufficient in a general sense but "necessary" (?), necessary for "salvation", necessary for "justification". This is related to the sola gratia and sola fide which also govern the ecclesiastical concept of the church. The primary meaning and aim of the satis est and the nec necesse est is not only to point towards ecumenical openness or freedom but specifically to stress that these only are the true marks and constitutive elements of the church by which justification through grace by faith are mediated, and which are "necessary for salvation" (CA XV/2). Thus in the teaching about the church according to the CA, justification through grace by faith lies at the center.

Matters of church usage established by men are further described in CA XV and are to be observed for peace and good order in the church, as long as they are not contrary to the Gospel and the teaching about faith in Christ. If human traditions and ceremonies instituted by men were mandatory for salvation, then this would constitute justification by works, which is contradictory to the Scriptures. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that regulations, traditions, and institutions not in contradiction with the Gospel should be observed. The satis est concerns differentiation and coordination between Law and Gospel, stressing the superiority of the Gospel over the church and at the same time pointing towards freedom in the church but not freedom from the church. (8)

The question of the unity of the church cannot in the first place be a matter of conforming to church usages or ecclesiastical law and order. In the historical situation of the 16th century, the CA was meant as a renewal and correction of the compulsory uniformity features of the Roman Church. Thus far we have touched upon the continuity and apostolicity of the church; the church as the community of believers, consisting of saints and true believers; the church as the place where the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments administered; the basic unity of the church; the interdependence of justification through grace by faith and the ecclesiological concept of the church. These portray to a great extent an image of the "hidden" or non-institutional church, "made up of men scattered throughout the world who agree on the Gospel, and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments". (9)

4. To article VII is added article VIII. We should note that article VII is about "the church and unity", while article VIII is about "what the church is in its reality". CA VIII begins by repeating the definition of the church given in CA VII, while at the same time adding two important pieces of information; on the efficacy of the Word and Sacraments even when administered by wicked priests, and on the church when in its imperfection it includes also hypocrites and open sinners. In the first place, the validity of the means of grace is not dependent upon the character of the administrator. The doctrine of original sin (CA II) which teaches that concupiscence remains after baptism did not make an exception of those in the ordained ministry. (10) Justifying grace arising out of divine action is the chief point. CA VIII declares that the efficacy of the Word and Sacraments is assured by their divine source, rather than being dependent upon the moral or priestly character of the administrator of the Sacraments. What counts in Lutheran ecclesiology is God's promise of salvation, the Gospel, not the measurable effect of the Gospel in terms of an exact distinction between those who are and those who are not true Christians. However, all believers are simultaneously justified and sinners. In the second place an important aspect of the church is introduced when the article points out that in this life, in this world, the historical reality of the church is seen to be a "mixed body" in which both believers and hypocrites are present. Accordingly "perfect" and "imperfect" churches are, in this world, intermingled. The features of both the "hidden" and "visible" church are recognized, balanced by the unconditional, divine efficacy of the Sacraments as the "visible" Word of God. (11)
5. It is important with regard to the topic of this paper to realize that both the Donatists and others (Anabaptists, Schwenckfelders, etc.) are rejected. Hereby, a "moralistic" ecclesiology represented especially by the Anabaptists, who did not want to participate in civil government at the time of Reformation, was rejected. The church did not separate itself from the world, although it is not of the world, but held that Christians should engage in a dynamic encounter with the world and in the struggle between the forces of good and evil. The world of men is not purified by a withdrawn puritanical discipline but within an active encounter with the living World of God. As Luther said: "Get busy now; spread the holy gospel, and help others spread it..." (12), at the same time he pointed out that this should be done in a Christian life-style of faith and love. The common order of Christian love stresses serving the needy person, feeding the hungry, forgiving enemies, praying for all men on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc. (13) However, the stress remains on "justifying grace, grace through divine action", rather than on the direct task of the church to solve human problems in society. Salvation is central.

The CA conceives of the church as in a constant struggle, and as constantly to be recreated and sustained by the Word of God:

"Now we are only halfway pure and holy. The Holy Spirit must continue to work in us through the Word, daily granting of forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness." (Large Catechism (LC), part II/58).

6. The new evangelical approach in the CA's conception of the church is that the main point at issue is the question of salvation. (14) Salvation, the whole of it, is of God and not of man. From this soteriological discovery emerges a new ecclesiological perspective whereby the Gospel, the Word of God, is seen as the real constituent of the church and the ultimate norm above and in the church. The living Gospel is the ground and center of the church. It is at the same time the critical norm for its activities. It is the new understanding of the church against the traditional understanding of that time. The Gospel and the Sacraments administered according to the Gospel gather and create the church. The church is not founded by men but by the living Gospel of Christ. It does not depend upon institutions regulated by human traditions or rules and ceremonies, but on the Gospel preached and the Sacraments administered, through which God's justification in Jesus Christ is effectively given to us through the Holy Spirit. It points towards the true meaning of life which goes beyond the world of achievements and disappointments. Here a "critical" word must be said. True, the church is an act of God in gathering believers but the church is also a "sending" act. The church is gathered in order to be "sent" at the same time: sent to the world of human religious-spirituality and poverty in Asia and to the scientific-modern technology of the affluent West.

The Gospel is always embodied in a visible gathering of believers for as long as the world exists. This visible community in its historical reality is the community of saints and sinners, the simultaneously righteous and sinful (*simul iustus et peccator*). In its pilgrimage on earth the church is a mixed body of saints and sinners. The church as an institution cannot be completely identified with the kingdom, but it does stand in the world as a witness to and sign of that kingdom. (15) The institutional church is in the world. Thus the believers in the church are members of God's church and at the same time members of groups, the society, and the state -- the world.

The marks of the gatherings, the church, are that there the Gospel is rightly preached and the Sacraments administered. The criterion of the right preaching of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments is the reaffirmation and proclamation of "justification by grace through faith in Christ": any other rites or ceremonies may be introduced, for order and peace, but without any status of merit. The more formal marks become real in life, where there is discipleship in love, community in the spirit, and solidarity with the oppressed and suffering. The church mirrors the theology of the cross:

"Now, wherever you hear or see this word preached, believed, professed and lived, do not doubt that the true ecclesia sancta catholica 'a Christian holy people', must be there." (16)

To this must be added as a mark of the church that the holy Christian people are to be recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross. (17) Thus the enduring of suffering or sharing in suffering is also a mark of the church. To have trust and faith in God is always, in this world, related to attacks of the devil, to suffering. As the LC part i/42 states: "For the world sees that those who trust God...suffer grief and want and are opposed and attacked by the devil".

The theology of the cross as related to the church rejects both a flight from the world and triumphalism. In our own contextual situation, it should be added with regard to the marks of the true church that the B.Ch.C., although identical with the main features of CA VIII, mentions that "the exercise of church discipline in order to prevent sin" is also a mark of the true church. (18) We find this in other Lutheran churches in Asia and Africa, while most of the Reformed churches, on the basis of Calvin's theology, also include church discipline as a feature of the true church. (19)

The church according to the CA, condemns heretical teaching, and the office of the bishop (ordained clergy) can exclude the wicked and the ungodly Christian community on the basis of God's Word (CA XXVIII/21). We should, however, bear in mind that the CA wants to stress strongly the basic elements instituted by God for man's salvation as the true marks of the church, viz. faith in Christ through the Gospel and Sacraments.

It is through this ministry of the church in all its variation and diversity that its members fulfil the function of the church, its vocation and reason for being; the ministry belongs to the whole body of believers. All the various ways in which the church fulfils its functions should center on making the Gospel known so that it can be believed. In the Lutheran tradition (see CA V), a basic and essential ministry is that of "Word and Sacrament". Forms of ministry may change, but the vocation does not change. The "ordained ministry's" specific function is to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacrament.

With regard to church organization, the question is not at all whether the church should or should not have an organization. The basic question is how this organization is regarded and for what purpose it is created. Christ gathers the people in his church and this creates a structure or organization to carry out its mission. There is freedom in organizational forms, but always based on and aimed at making relevant the Gospel message in Christ to the world. Thus, Lutheran churches should or may constantly reform their organizational structures. As Gritsch and Jensen stated: "There can be no permanently mandated pattern of organization, only a

permanently mandated mission for which to organize". (20) Thus Lutherans should not press too insistently for a particular church order as a requirement for church unity, although unity in church order is important.

The central message to be preached, the message central to all the church's ministry, is "justification through grace by faith whereby living faith produces good fruits and good works". (21). Justification by grace alone is the ground or foundation of church life.

"Faith is a vital, deliberate trust in God's grace" (22), and at the same time a "living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good". (23) The church in this world is for the public (open) proclamation of the message of God's justifying grace in Christ. It is to be for the world: to comfort men and women with Christ, to call them to faith. The church is God's instrument for mission. In the same way as the fundamental nature of God is revealed in Jesus Christ, so the work of redemption, reconciliation, salvation is revealed in the church's mission.

This work of redemption deals also of course with social and political realities, with the poor, the prisoners, the blind, victims of injustice, etc. (Luke 4:18-19). As the Solid Declaration expresses it: "faith is...so certain that it would die a thousand times for (God's grace) it". (24) This faith, which is constitutive in the church means:... "willing and desirous to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything for the love of God and to his glory..." (25) As Christ has come into the world and gave himself to the world, so his church has to give itself to the world; as it lives in faith and trust in the Saviour, this giving itself to the world is precisely the meaning of being at the same time in the world and yet "not being conformed to this world". Thus, stemming from the nature and function of the church in the world, there is a gift and a call to the church to encounter and interaction in the world. The identity of the church as the Body of Christ is made up of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. This gift has at the same time to be expressed in the life of the church if it is to remain faithful to its nature and call.

## II. The "World" as Interpreted through the CA

7. When we try to discern the "concept" of the world from the CA and other Lutheran confessions in the Book of Concord, we feel that not much is said directly about the "world" itself. Thus we must make use of scattered statements in various articles about creation, sin, civil government, salvation, etc. to formulate the "vision" of the world as presented in the CA.

Firstly, we can speak about the world as the sum total of creation, the universe which God has created from the beginning. The Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed, which are included in the Book of Concord and preside the CA, speak of God as maker of heaven and earth, or,

as the Nicene Creed adds, "of all things visible and invisible".

CA I/3 speaks of God, the Trinity, as the "one creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible". Thus it must be kept in mind that the world as a creation of God is a place which he preserves and maintains, and in this work the followers of Christ participate. Apology XIX/1 mentions that "God alone has established all of nature and preserves everything that exists". We are created in God's image (Gen. 1:26). This means also that according to the divine pattern, there should be an exercise of responsible care for creation, a stewardship in the human relations of men and women, and accounting to our Master for the use and abuse of God's gift in nature.

8. Secondly, the world can also be seen as the world of the order of human existence, the space-time context of human life. This order of human existence, as mentioned in CA II (Original sin), is, since the fall of Adam, "full of evil lust and inclinations...unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God". Human sinfulness, however, is referred back to the "fall of Adam" and must not be seen as part of human nature as created by God.

Through hereditary or original sin, all men are condemned to the eternal wrath of God, except those who are born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit (CA II/2). This sinful world of humanity still has some measure of free will (CA XVIII) which gives man a certain liberty of action and enables him, while living according to natural law, to make choices according to natural reason and judgement. To some extent, it can achieve civil righteousness or the righteousness of works; it can even talk about God and express its worship of him in outward works. Civil righteousness, thus conceived, is "good" for human existence - to obey rulers, and parents, to work against murders, theft, adultery, etc. (26), but it cannot free us from sin nor cause us to merit forgiveness of sins. (27)

The CA makes a distinction between human righteousness according to the law and spiritual righteousness according to the Gospel. With regard to the state of man in the fallen world the Confessions included in the Book of Concord, for example, state the following:

- a. Fear of and trust in God are denied to man's natural powers (Apology II/3).
- b. The "fallen" world does not know God as Creator and Lord by reason. "Although the whole world has sought painstakingly to learn what God is...yet it has never succeeded in the least" (LC part I, art. III/63).
- c. "The wretched, perverse world acts, drowned in blindness... never once turning to God to thank him or acknowledge him as Lord and Creator. (LC part I, art. II/21).
- d. The way of the world is realistically described as "nothing but a vast, wide stable full of great thieves" (LC on the VIIth Commandment/228).

Thus it is a hostile world, revolting against God. The Lutheran confessions seem to have a rather pessimistic outlook or anthropology of "fallen" man. On the other hand, they point out the unmerited love of God in Christ and God's justifying grace (Articles III-IV).

9. Thirdly, the world, while hostile to God, remains a world claimed by Christ. The world is an object of God's love (John 3:16). Art. III of the CA speaks of the work and sacrifice of Christ not only for original sin but also for all other sins, to sanctify and purify all who believe. Art. IV speaks of justification, while Art. V says that we have "a gracious God". Jesus was sent by the Father, not to condemn the world but "that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). This is basically the mission of the church to the world - to call for repentance, penitence, and faith (CA XII, Apology XII).
10. Fourthly, the world can also be understood, although only partially, through the nations and different governments in which people live. It is said that for the sake of good order, civil government with its rules and laws has been instituted and ordained by God and that all people should participate in it responsibly. Civil authority, the state, the home, social or political classes, etc. should be kept as true orders of God and all people according to their calling or vocation should manifest Christian love and genuine good works in their situation in life (see CA XVI - "Civil Government"). Thus participation is seen as good and full obedience to all lawful government is limited only by the clause "without sin" and that "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This must be interpreted to mean that participation in and loyalty to groups and associations in the nation or state (the world of men) are always conditional and never absolute. The criterion for participation is loyalty to God which provides the basis for both an "either-or" and a "both-and" relationship - there is a strong emphasis on "vocation" in the place and situation where one finds oneself.

This participation is stressed again through the condemnation of those (the Anabaptists) who forbid Christians to engage in civil functions. Preservation of the world and the exercise of love are called for. The Christian should live in the realm of "law and order", which is related to duties of civil government, as well as in the realm of Word and Sacrament. The state preserves the old order which is based on law and free will (XVIII); the Gospel promises a new order and in this life Christians need both. (28)

Probably one critique which could be made of Art. XVI of the CA is that it puts a comparatively strong emphasis on strict obedience to civil authority while not much is said directly about the Christian task to transform and renew this order. Furthermore, because of its historical setting in which the governments of the empire, especially those of the 16th century princes and

magistrates in Germany, were in the Christian tradition. Today's situation, with governments based on non-Christian religions and usurping dictatorial power, was not clearly foreseen. Passivism rather than activism can easily come through the word of the last sentence: "But when commands of the civil authority cannot be obeyed without sin, we must obey God rather than men." Art. XVI of the CA can seem to present total submission to civil government except when we are commanded to commit sin. What is the interpretation of "sin" here within the realm of the civil government which is described as the "true order of God"? The B.Ch.C. in art. 12 "concerning Government", although basing its views on Romans 13, puts the qualification "that the Government which has authority from God...is a government which opposes evil and administers justice", which helps (the believers) to live in peace and tranquility. Although the church ought to pray for the government (1 Tim 2:2), the B.Ch.C. voices a strong, "However, the Church should also let its voice be heard by the Government". It warns also against a nationalistic Christianity, which developed, for example, during the period of the revolution in Indonesia and other nations.

11. One cannot take up article CA XVI without relating it at the same time to CA XXVIII where the distinction between the spiritual and temporal power of the church and the state, the so-called doctrine of the "two kingdoms" is taken up. "The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Art. XXVIII/9), and "Temporal power does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others. Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused... (Art. XVIII/11-12).

The separation of "state and church" must be evaluated as good, but here the differences and separation between the church as the "spiritual power" and the state as the "temporal power" see to be dogmatically established with no pointing towards the connection or encounter of the church with the state. The dualism becomes stronger when we read the supporting biblical texts given: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and "Our commonwealth is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). It must be noted that realistically the Christian citizen belongs to both the church and the state. According to Duchrow, however, the "twofold governance" for God's modes of acting (according to Luther) are interrelated in the following way: "Because all human institutions serve God's loving will, they also serve one another. This means that God's twofold governance (spiritual and temporal) and the human institutions employed for this task are, in Luther's opinion, neither dualistically opposed to each other nor interdependent, but complementary and interrelated. For the institutions of the church and its ministries - and not only for individual Christians - this signifies concretely that, through the preaching of the Law and the Gospel and the promotion of the gifts of the Spirit, the church serves both God's spiritual



and his temporal 'governance'". (29)

12. We can further point to Luther's explanation of the doctrine of the two kingdoms in his "Treatise on Temporal Authority", where he did not separate too rigidly the earthly from the spiritual realm. "Both must be permitted to remain; the one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds. Neither one is sufficient in the world without the other". (30)

Luther's "Commentary on the prophet Zachariah" (31) stresses the same, but there he mentions "three kinds of external government and three methods or means": the secular rule with the sword, the spiritual with the Word, the angelic with reason and sense. "These three governments are not directed against each other, nor does the one crush or destroy the other, but rather all mutually serve one another." The secular rule, as the lowest and least of the rules of God, is needed for maintaining peace, to make the preaching of the word possible.

What is important in the context is:

- that both the spiritual and temporal power are in the hands and power of God. Christ is Lord also of the world.
  - that the world is God's creation and that Christians should act in a responsible way towards creation: nature, institutions, science, material things, human life, and human relationships in the social, economic, and political realms.
  - that there seems to be a passiveness, as if only through the preaching of the Word will the world become better. Is there Lutheran quietism here? Are the critical words of E. Troeltsch applicable: "Lutheran Christian individualism has retired behind the line of battle of all external events and outward activity, into a purely personal spirituality... This spirituality is based on nothing save the 'Word', which is guaranteed by the Church... As soon as the Christian believer turns from this spirituality to take part in real life, he can only express his inner liberty through submission to the existing order". (32)
13. There may be different interpretations of the "two kingdom" theory as, for example, in the books edited by two Lutheran theologians, Karl Hertz and Ulrich Duchrow. The work of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg (33) reminds us that at certain times and in specific situations the "two kingdom" theory has been falsely interpreted as meaning strict separation between the church and the world. The consequence of this was either a complete subordination of the church to the state or a passive attitude toward the state and society (the world). However, today a correct understanding of that doctrine

involves obedient participation in God's activity in the world. Through faith in the Gospel, Christians are freed and called to render service in the world through the use of reason, through deeds of "love" and justice, and through suffering on behalf of others. This activity in the world, however, no more leads to salvation than the Gospel aims at a progressive "christianization" of the world or a gradual establishment of the kingdom of God. Indeed God is already beginning his new creation here, but will unveil and complete it only at the end of time. That, however, does not release the church from its responsibility to stand up for true human community and to oppose inhuman and unjust situations. Governing authority is for order and peace, to punish evil deeds, to make preaching of the Word possible. What about "unjust" governments, and situations in which the preaching of the Word is not possible at all?

### III. The Church in the World: Some Concluding Comments

14. One of the difficulties of speaking about the church in the Asian setting is related to the difficulties of making a precise distinction between the church as church and the church as the institutional churches and congregations with all its differences and divisions. To a certain extent, the problem is mirrored in articles VII and VIII of the CA, which, as we have seen, speak about "The Church" and "What the Church Is" or, to use the titles given in the new German edition of the CA, (34) "Ueber die Kirche und Einheit" (art. VII) and "Ueber die Wirklichkeit der Kirche" (art. VIII). Central, however, is the church, defined as Christ's body working through the Gospel and the Sacraments (35). These two marks are decisive for its basic nature and function. The task of the church, even in our present world, even if it is separated from the 16th century by time and a cultural, socio-political "gap" is still the proclamation of God's justifying grace in Christ to the world. The church is where the unconditional promise of the Gospel is proclaimed and received, in words and action. The authority above and within the church is fundamentally the authority of God's promise in Christ and its credibility for the world appears in the living out of this promise in the total life of the believers. This of course touches on the question, "Who speaks for or in the name of the church?". In our present state of divided churches, we are confronted with different dogmatic statements and competing interpretations of religious and socio-political issues. Confronted as they also are with current pseudo-religious-ideological systems, the churches have an urgent need for unity so they can speak with authority to the world that the world may believe (John 7:21).
15. Important for the encounter of the church with the world is the recognition that the church, through its office of ministry, is used by God as an "instrument for salvation", and that good works or active participation in the world are the "result or fruit of justification", "The New Obedience" (art. VI) - faith

producing good works. Faith implies a life lived in fidelity to Christ, the submission to his authority of one's whole existence and one's every action.

Translated into our present Asian world and the realities of life, this implies, for example:

- a. the call for the divided church to repent, to search and work for communion in faith, nationally and in the international dimension;
- b. the need to confess the one faith in the contextual situation of one's particular socio-cultural inheritance, taking into account language, thought forms, values, and encounter with the economic-political life;
- c. the need for dialogue and encounter with the different religious surrounding us, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc., with a consciousness of the growing importance of such world religions;
- d. the need to meet the challenge of theoretical and practical forms of atheism, viz. movements and (or) ideologies which "see the finite and visible world as the only reality with which humanity has to reckon". Secularization is rapidly spreading.

It is through the believer in his daily life that the church witnesses to the justifying grace of God, expressing God's creative will towards the world and at the same time testing and working for renewal of the existing order of the world and of its own context and forms of proclamation, witness and service. Within the specific doctrinal position of "justification through God's grace", there is freedom for Lutheran churches to adapt liturgical forms and ceremonies and forms of church government to the different contexts in which they find themselves. Thus the Lutheran churches of Asia with their rich cultural heritage have a propitious place to enrich church rites and usages coming from the West and at the same time to examine critically the place and meaning of their own established rites and forms of church government. Especially with regard to the tendency of Lutheran churches to put strong emphasis on doctrinal statements, it should be remembered that confession of faith is intimately related to the expression and practice of what one believes about human life in this world: human dignity and rights, abolition of discrimination of all kinds, the realization of justice and peace. Confession means faith risking itself in love in the expression and practice of what one believes.

16. The importance of vocation or call within the station and office or, in modern sociological terms, status (or position) and role (duties and responsibilities according to the status) is also an asset especially within our Asian context. It is extremely important that we, as Lutheran churches, extend our creed and

confessions to the secular world through the faithful expression of our Christian faith in our daily, secular world whether as labourers in the fields and in industry or in civil and military jobs. In situations where the open propagation of the Gospel to non-Christians is becoming more and more limited, the "Christian presence" in faithful performance of the daily task is a forceful proclamation of Christian social, economic, and political principles in the world.

This understanding of vocation is also a very important warning against all forms of corruption, whether in the family, government, or society, or even in the church organization. It calls for Christian stewardship to penetrate the world of ordinary human existence and relationships. The recovery of a true doctrine of vocation is important for Asian churches, living as minority groups within dominant non-Christian groups such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. But it should not be limited to a static understanding of "station of life". (36)

17. Extending the worship of God from the sanctuary to the secular world, the creeds and confessions to confessing Christ in daily life, theology from study in seminaries to the world of Asian thought, philosophy and religion, is part of the renewed life in Christ and proclamation, and should not be thought of or understood as merely techniques of evangelism and preaching. (37)
- The acknowledgement of "good" works in the natural order as the fruit of justification in Christ is also a liberating call to the well-known Asian spirituality and religiousity with its accent on divine priority to religious piety and actions rather than to participation in "secular" activities, which are seen as only "secondary" to religious ones. Asia is now wrestling especially with the immense problems of secularization, and that in the midst of pronounced Asian religiosity.

The Reformation, occurring as it did at a time when the secular sphere was subordinate to the spiritual, rediscovered the world as the place and expression of God's creative will in which the laity and secular occupations have their place for the preservation of order in the world. The Reformation doctrine of vocation rejects the downgrading of the temporal in favour of the purely spiritual and sees the world as the sphere in which men and women are called to become co-workers with God. (38)

The love of God which embraces all that he has created, motivates the church to show concern also for the welfare of others. It is the function of the church to put itself at the service of a world full of need. Translated into the Asian setting of great illiteracy, poverty and disease, this means that the church is called to minister compassionately to needs of people through words of mercy, education, health care, and development: through active solidarity and identification with the needy and voiceless. Churches in Asia are comparatively rich in the midst of a society marked by poverty and hunger.

18. A specific area needing serious attention in the Asian world is the rapidly growing pressure for complete acceptance and obedience to state ideologies as philosophies of the state. It is natural that the state should ask its citizens to be loyal. For example, the Pancasila state philosophy is firmly established in Indonesia for the preservation of unity and the maintenance of a "secular" state rather than based upon the religion of the majority. The Pancasila has also provided for religious freedom and tolerance. But we should be aware that state ideologies can become so strongly accentuated that they do not leave much room even for creative criticism and interpretation, and as a result civil liberties are easily infringed. There may be in some Asian countries practices and systems which cannot be tolerated, for example, those related to the "Daijosaï" (the national Shinto ceremony of thanksgiving in which the emperor functioned as a divinity) (39). Christians should guard against idolatry of any nation and boundless loyalty to any state. One big problem posed by the CA in the political arena is centered around obedience to the state, its commands and laws.

CA art. XVI and Romans 13 should be understood as pointing to the principle of "governing authority" (40) rather than as proclaiming that all existing governments and all established rules and laws are indeed acceptable to God. The point of departure is the responsibility of all civil governments to God's will and call. The "governing authority" is ordained by God as an instrument against evil and to make an orderly life possible in this world. Thus while obedience is acknowledged, all people, including non-Christians, are called to work for a just and responsible government. Therefore, the church besides taking a positive stand, should always be critical. There can be no uncritical endorsement of any particular civil government, especially if it is unjust and oppressive.

A second remark concerns the affirmation of the CA that "all established rule and laws were instituted and ordained by God". One can ask "which established rule and laws?" Certainly not that of, for example, "apartheid" in South Africa or the laws and regulations of the Nazi regime. What is the interpretation of "established" or "legitimate" rule in the CA?

19. Another question concerns revolution. If there can be a place for "just wars", can there be a place for "just revolutions", like those fought by the developing nations of Asia and Africa against oppressive colonial domination? We know that the standard theory of obedience in the socio-political field in 16th century Europe was that of a strong hierarchical structure, and that the Protestantism of that time found it to be in its own interest to ally itself with the regional princely powers; otherwise its chances for survival were minimal. Jörg Baur even once commented: "Was it not the Germans' misfortune that with Luther and his followers they let the revolution take place only in heaven and in the conscience?" (41)

I believe that every Christian is called to make his own personal decision before God to act responsibly in the situation where he is, and to take courageous action based on that faith. It is the task of the church to sharpen the conscience of the people with the Word of truth and to let them decide in faith on a courageous encounter in their own particular situation. Under the motto, "To obey God rather than men", Christians are made free for a serene endeavour to seek justice in "fear and trembling", to take the risk of participating in the process of change and renewal and against all oppressive systems.

On the secular level of human existence, Christians and non-Christians can have many identical goals with respect to civil justice and cooperation among all citizens, and to good government and socio-economic-political life, all of which are greatly needed.

Another difficulty is with regard to CA art. XXVIII/10 in which is stated that "the power of the church" should "not interfere at all with government or temporal authority". Of course CA XXVIII was directed to the prevailing situation in the Roman Catholic Church of that time in which bishops also assumed worldly powers. But what about the prophetic voice of the church? The Batak Church Confession of Faith states, in art. 12, that besides praying for government that it may walk in righteousness, "the church should also let its voice be heard by the government". In situations where the claims of state ideologies and systems are extremely strong, what can the churches of Asia and Africa do? Certainly not remain in silence and passively accept the "status quo". (42) In fact, according to the findings of the Conference of Asian theologians in Wennappuwa, near Sri Lanka (1979) "practically all parliamentary governments in Asia...have at some time given way to military or authoritarian regimes of one form or the other". (43)

20. In its encounter with the world of institutions in society and the state, the church as a sign of the kingdom of God is to work and witness for "justice, peace, and joy" (Romans 14:17), and Christians are called to witness to freedom and renewed life, especially in and starting with the church's own organizational structures and ministry. The church is always to witness for justice and to take its stand against all forms of injustice, to struggle with and be an advocate for the oppressed and deprived, to work for liberation and fullness of life for all people (Luke 4:18-19). The positive function of justification is to inform justice and to work for it through the vision of justification in Christ. Here the meaning of justification will not be merely the distribution of goods and social power, but basically the acknowledgement of the dignity and value of the human person and the meaning of life in the sight of God. It is by seriously "letting God be God" that we are liberated to be truly human and to act responsibly in the world. Recognition of human sinfulness warns us, however, that a just society in this

world is always an aspiration and ideal to work for, and can never be a fully achieved reality. Reformation and renewal based on the Word of God and inspired by the Holy Spirit are an ongoing process and a permanent obligation both within the society and state and within the structures and various forms of ministry in the church.

The realities and contexts in which Asian churches' live pose serious questions to them and demand a relevant confession of faith, commitment, and risk-bearing witness. The CA is indeed of great importance also for Lutheran churches in Asia, providing guidance for witness, hermeneutical keys for interpreting Scripture and for "doing theology", based on the Gospel. Lutheran churches of Asia are called to reinterpret and translate this historic confession into their own cultural contexts and historical situation. There is need for a clear formulation of what the churches believe, teach, and preach. However, the act of faith does not stop at giving intelligible expressions but will be authentic only if what it expresses in words finds realistic and practical manifestation and encounter in the total life and activity of the churches in this world.

FOOTNOTES - to Dr. S.M. Butagalong's lecture on "The Church in the World"

- (1) "Smalcald Articles", part III, art. XII/2, Theodore G. Tappert, ed., The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 315.
- (2) "It has been customary since the fifteenth century to translate catholica with christlich." Tappert, *op. cit.*, p. 18, footnote 2.
- (3) Cf. Walter Kasper, "The Augsburg Confession in Roman Catholic Perspective", The Augsburg Confession in Ecumenical Perspective, ed. Harding Meyer, LWF Report, December 1979, No. 6/7.
- (4) See Paul Althaus, Die Theologie Martin Luthers (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1962), p. 257.
- (5) "Smalcald Articles", *op. cit.*, part III, art. XIII/3, p. 315.
- (6) "The Large Catechism", Tappert, *op. cit.*, pp. 415-38.
- (7) Cf. Harding Meyer and Heinz Schütte, eds., Confessio Augustana: Bekenntnis des einen Glaubens: Gemeinsame Untersuchung lutherischer und katholischer Theologen (Paderborn: Verlag Bonifatius-Druckerei, 1980), p. 185, where the word notwendig is used.
- (8) Kasper, *op. cit.*, p. 170. About freedom in "adiaphora", see "Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration", art. X/9, in Tappert, *op. cit.*, p. 612.
- (9) "Apology of the Augsburg Confession", arts. VII and VIII/10, Tappert, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

- (10) W.D. Allbeck, Studies in the Lutheran Confessions (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 83.
- (11) Originating in North Africa in the 4th century, denying the efficacy of Sacraments when administered by defectors during the persecution of the church, especially during the reign of Emperor Diocletian.
- (12) "Sincere Admonition by Martin Luther to All Christians to Guard Against Insurrection and Rebellion", Luther's Works vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), p. 68.
- (13) "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper", Luther's Works, op. cit., vol. 37, p. 385.
- (14) Kaspar, op. cit., pp. 168-69.
- (15) In "Apology of the Augsburg Confession", op. cit., arts. VII and VIII/16-17, however, the church is called the kingdom of Christ, the opposite of the kingdom of the devil.
- (16) "On the Councils and the Church", Luther's Works, op. cit., vol. 41, p. 150.
- (17) Ibid., p. 164.
- (18) See art. E.8 in the Batak Church Confession of Faith.
- (19) Cf. Einar Molland, Christendom: The Christian Churches throughout the World, Their Doctrines, Constitutional Forms and Ways of Worship (London: Mowbray, 1959), pp. 253-54.
- (20) Erich W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jensen, Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 136.
- (21) The terminology "living faith" is actually a "tautology" or redundancy - needless repetition. "Dead faith" is a contradiction in terms.
- (22) "Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration", art. IV on "Good Works", Tappert, op. cit., p. 553/12.
- (23) Ibid., pp. 552-53/10.
- (24) Ibid., p. 553/12
- (25) Ibid., p. 553/12.
- (26) See also "Apology", XVIII for the exposition of free will, in Tappert, op. cit., pp. 224.26.



- (27) "Apology" IV/27 and IV/31, in Tappert, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-04.
- (28) Gritsch and Jensen, *op. cit.*, p. 1982.
- (29) Ulrich Duchrow, ed., Lutheran Churches - Salt or Mirror of Society: Case Studies on the Theory and Practice of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine (Geneva: LWF, 1977), pp. 4-5.
- (30) "Treatise on Temporal Authority: To Which Extent It Should Be Obeyed", Luther's Works, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-129. Quotation from p. 92.
- (31) "Commentary on the Prophet Zachariah", WA 23, 513, 35ff. Quoted in Karl Hertz, Two Kingdoms and One World: A Sourcebook in Christian Social Ethics (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1976), pp. 63-4.
- (32) E. Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches (New York: Harpers, 1960), vol. 2, p. 540; cf. p. 576.
- (33) See Institute for Ecumenical Research, Lutheran Identity: Final Report of the Study Project: "The Identity of the Lutheran Churches in the Context of the Challenges of our Time" (Strasbourg: 1977). The words used in the document are the same although the order is not precisely followed.
- (34) Das Augsburgische Bekenntnis Deutsch, 1530-1980, pp. 25-26. Revidierter Text (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978).
- (35) Cf. Edmund Schlink, "The Ecumenical Character and Claim of the Augsburg Confession", The Augsburg Confession in Ecumenical Perspective, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- (36) "The Augsburg Confession", art. XVI/5, in Tappert, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
- (37) Statement of the Christian Conference of Asia, "The Confessing Church in Asia and Its Theological Task", in What Asian Christians are Thinking, Douglas J. Elwood, ed. (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1976), p. 43.
- (38) Lutheran Identity, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Important in this regard is W. Altmann's article pointing to Christian concern for people and their rights as a call for the churches' engagement in the socio-political world: "Eight Theses on Christian Social Responsibility", Human Rights Concerns, Newsletter on Christian social responsibility (Geneva: LWF, No. 3, May 1980), p. 85.
- (39) See CCA News, vol. 14, no. 5, p. 9, where several developments of oppressive regulations by the state in Asian countries are cited.
- (40) See also "Lectures on Romans", Luther's Works, *op. cit.*, vol. 25, p. 468, where the term "governing authority" is used.

- (41) Cited in Olver K. Olson, "Politics, Liturgics and Integritas Sacramenti", in Discord, Dialogue and Concord: Studies in the Lutheran Reformation's Formula of Concord, L. Spitz and W. Lohff, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 85.
- (42) Concerning the matter of "resistance" in Lutheranism of the 16th century, see among others:  
 V. Cargill-Thompson, Luther and the Right of Resistance to Emperors, vol. 12 of Studies in Church History (1975).  
 J.W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the 16th Century (1928).  
 Erich Gritsch, "Martin Luther and Violence", 16th Century Journal, vol. 3, April 1972.  
 B. Hildebrandt, "The Magdeburg Bekenntnis as a possible link between German and English Resistance Theories in the Sixteenth Century", Archive for Reformation History (1980), pp. 227-53.
- (43) See "Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity", WCC Exchange, no. 3, July 1979, pp. 1-9.

## THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN ASIA TODAY AN ASIAN RESPONSE

by

Choong Chee Pang (Singapore)

### I. Introductory notes

Before I give my response to Professor Tokuzen's lecture on "The Augsburg Confession in Asia Today", I would like to remind ourselves of the following points:

1. The theme of this symposium was decided at the last APATS Workshop in Hong Kong in March, 1979, "The Augsburg Confession in Asia Today", with the sub-theme "Its Relevance and Challenge for Mission and Ecumenism".
2. The 1979 Workshop also spelled out the following objectives for this symposium:
  - a) to recapture the meaning, significance, and relevance of the C.A. for ourselves;
  - b) to share this self-understanding and evaluation in the ecumenical setting in the form of dialogue and studies;
  - c) to bring the above two objectives to bear on the mission of the Lutheran churches;
  - d) to help churches promote fellowship and community life at the grassroot level;
  - e) to equip churches and people for ministry, mission, and ecumenism.
3. As stated in the 1979 Recommendations, "Our task today in Asia is not simply to repeat what forefathers and heroes of faith in the 16th century confessed and documented, but to make it our own and confess it in our own Asian context by involvement and participation in the Asian struggle for social justice, freedom, and human dignity."

These points, I suggest, should serve as guidelines for our present symposium. Professor Tokuzen's lecture is our keynote address. As such, its merits or demerits are to be judged, to a large extent, by these guidelines. Let us see if the lecture actually struck the keynote for the symposium and set a direction for us to follow.

### II. Response

First of all, I must say that I appreciate the lecture very much. It is very well structured and has a clear historical perspective. It takes seriously the original intention as well as the original situation of the C.A. in order to understand, interpret, and rediscover them in the present contexts of Asia, with the hope of making the C.A. authentically our own.

Although the C.A. has come to us as a written document and thus as a given formula, Professor Tokuzen's approach to the Confession is a dynamic and existential one. He has repeatedly stressed the importance and urgency of making the C.A. a living faith for ourselves in Asia in our witness and mission and warns against confessionalism. As Professor Tokuzen has rightly perceived, the central concern of the C.A. is God's saving Gospel for man in and through Jesus Christ. It is therefore christological and soteriological in intent and emphasis. He insists that "The witness, the mission, and the life of the Church should always reflect this central concern in words and in action". He then relates this point to the vital question of our Lutheran identity and reminds us of the two "marks" of the church which are: the pure preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments according to the Gospel. I particularly like his suggestion that to be truly Lutheran is to be authentically Christian. For the two are actually identical. It is only in this sense that we could justly and boldly claim ecumenicity and catholicity for the C.A., in the end making it a common heritage for the universal Church of Christ.

Although the topic of the keynote lecture is "The Augsburg Confession in Asia Today", Professor Tokuzen thinks that it is difficult or impossible for him to speak generally on Asia. In the end, he chooses to address himself only to the Japanese situation. Even this attempt is considered by him to be "fragmentary". On this particular point, I must say that, while I appreciate Professor Tokuzen's modesty, I do feel rather disappointed with his narrow scope of reference, simply because I believe a man of his caliber is capable of doing far more than he has done in this respect. In fact, what he has said about Japan is, to a great extent, applicable to the Confucianist-Taoist-Buddhist tradition of the Chinese as well as to the Hindu tradition of the Indians. I refer here especially to what Professor Tokuzen considers to be the syncretistic and naturalistic tendency in the Japanese mentality which makes no distinction between god, man and things. I would like to add that this is largely due to the absence of an adequate understanding of creation. As such, the created order is often indistinguishable from the Creator. I therefore agree fully with Professor Tokuzen that there is the need of confrontation, rejection, and negation, as the Gospel of Christ encounters this kind of religio-cultural situation. The only adequate and effective response to it is the incarnation, the decisive "God becoming man" event, although we fully realize that this decisive act of God in Christ is often a stumbling block -- the skandalos -- to traditional Asian thought-forms just as it was to ancient Graeco-Roman thinking. But paradoxically, it is only through this skandalos that the true humanity of Christ has been brought to us and for us. It is this true humanity for which Asia (like people everywhere) is now desperately yearning in its struggle for social justice, freedom, and human dignity. In this context, Christian participation and involvement are inevitable. Our theology of incarnation not only justifies it, but also demands it. As disciples of Christ, we are duty-bound to share this new humanity in Christ with fellow Asians and humankind as a whole. But judging from the present climate in Asia, our struggle for justice, freedom, and human dignity could easily be interpreted largely, if not exclusively, in socio-

political terms, missing in the end the spiritual dimension of our witness and mission. It is therefore necessary, as Professor Tokuzen has rightly pointed out, to witness at the same time to God as the "totally other", as the absolute and the transcendent one. Only in this way can we faithfully proclaim Christ, the God-man, alone as the Saviour, and grace alone as the way of man's salvation.

I like the examples which Professor Tokuzen has used to show the possibility of reinterpreting the Gospel in our own cultural contexts. If I have understood him correctly, this approach is basically dialectical and existential. It is dialectical because the Gospel of Christ always comes to the human situation in salvation and judgement at the same time. It is existential because the confrontation of the Gospel with man in his total living context immediately creates a crisis situation from which man cannot escape and in which he must say either "yes" or "no" to God. I think this existential sense of crisis and urgency is a most vital point in the present Asian contexts. Ultimately, it must be an absolutely vital choice between the living God and Ba'al or any other form of idolatry or ideology. If the choice is indeed for God, then "let God be God". Professor Tokuzen's closing quotation from Is. 55:11 not only challenges us to faithful witness and concrete actions, but also gives us purpose and hope.

### III. Conclusion

Judged by the theme and the objectives of the symposium, Professor Tokuzen's lecture must be said to have done a good job for which we are grateful. However, I do feel that there are a couple of aspects which have not been given sufficient emphasis in his lecture. He has rightly stressed the relevance of the C.A. and its central concern. He has convincingly argued for its reinterpretation and contextualization. I wish he had said something more on the relevance and challenge of the C.A. for the ongoing mission and ecumenical task of the Lutheran church in Asia. These are particularly vital for us in Asia because, as Professor Tokuzen has made clear in his Introduction, Christians in Asia today are an "absolute minority". I would like to qualify this by suggesting that they are not only an "absolute minority" but also a much divided minority. Therefore, the need for Christians in Asia to be truly united in Christ is a most urgent one. In the providence of God, let us earnestly pray and hope that the C.A. may be used effectively as a unifying force. Amen.

## THE LIVING GOD AND THE NEW HUMANITY: AN AFRICAN RESPONSE

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by

Professor Ogbu U. Kalu

### Preamble

First of all, I wish to express my profound gratitude to God for travelling mercies and to the organizers for their kind invitation. In recent years, as my consciousness has broadened with the experience of serving as Chairman of the Conference of African Theological Institutions, I have become very concerned about the lack of creative contact between the churches of Asia and Africa. We only meet in Europe and America as guests of the western churches. Yet the few contacts which have been made between us have been most productive. One example is the influence of the Church of South India on the church union movement in Nigeria. I looked forward very much to this trip as an opportunity for prospecting for channels of bilateral relations between Asian and African theologians.

Now, to my main task: I must congratulate Rev. Won Yong Ji on his presentation. Without any pretension of repeating him, I want to say that I was fascinated by his intention to relate the theological import of the relevant articles of the A.C. to modern concerns, especially modern perceptions of God, Jesus Christ, and sin, and to the false neglect of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

This methodology is consonant with the original spirit of the A.C. For one thing, the A.C. was not a mere act of theoretical theologizing; rather, it was designed to be a practical document to resolve religious and political crises and uncertainties of the day. It was also a radical, albeit conciliatory document which could serve as a guide to those who boldly challenged certain unsavoury theological trends of the Catholic Church. Throughout history, the followers of Christ have, like unguided missiles, often verred from their projected trajectory. Non-Christian ideologies, religions, religious fads, and intellectual trends have often obscured our vision and goals. History also shows that men and women have emerged who sharply and radically recalled the church to the apostolic traditions. Perhaps this is why the British historian, G.R. Elton, explained the Luther phenomenon as the coinciding of the times and the man. (The Reformation)

If it is accepted that the foregoing summarizes the spirit or characteristics of the A.C., this would mean that my concern and reaction should be to re-examine the A.C. in the light of my context: my origin (locale), time, and experience. This is contextual theology. Does the A.C. say anything to me in the place where I was born and now work?

I am an African, born in Nigeria, studied in Nigeria, Canada (University of Toronto), Britain (University of London), and the USA (Princeton). I am a lay Presbyterian who has passed through a seminary. I have also

been teaching Church History in the university, and in the last four years have served the church in various capacities including as Secretary-General of the West African Association of Theological Institutions and Chairman of the Conference of African Theological Institutions. In these organizations we are seriously concerned with patterns of the ministry and ministerial formation in the African continent. We intend to catalyze theological discourse and constantly to re-examine both the strategies of evangelism and the personnel for mission.

Coming as I do from this context, you should not be shocked if my first basic questions are framed thus:

- Do I, as an African Christian in the 1980's, need a confession which emerged from battles fought in Germany in the 16th century?
- Does the A.C. speak to the urgent theological questions raised in Africa today?

There is no intention here merely to posture as an iconoclast. After all, Bonhoeffer once remarked that some ancient liturgies and doctrinal affirmations could cease to elicit commitment. In my own context, I am hoarding a medal for anyone who could translate the Nicene Creed into my Igbo language so that people could understand "very God of very God begotten not created". The barriers of language and thought forms are formidable. Times have changed and the battle bugles which produced those affirmations sound distant.

I realize that a fervently incautious theologian may assume that African churches beset with the possibilities of syncretism need the guiding light of ancient confessions. Beetham who worked for the British Methodist Missionary Society wondered, on the eve of Ghana's independence, whether Christianity had planted firm enough roots in Africa to enable it to survive the avalanche of declarations of political independence, or whether Africans would return to tribal religions as the cultural corollary of political independence.

Let me, therefore, confess that I accept that the A.C. could serve as a hermeneutical guide to the extent that it affirms the supreme authority of the Scripture as the norm for the proclamation of the Gospel and provides authoritative guidance and direction in the interpretation of this normative Scripture. But I also realize two other aspects of the matter: (1) Generally speaking, confessions originate in different geographical and historical situations and use different vocabularies. These differences do not of themselves preclude unity in the faith which is confessed in them but do call for constant re-interpretation. (2) Syncretism was a stick used by frightened Europeans to beat down the emergence of radical theologizing in the Third World. Years passed, metanoia won the day, and a profound realization emerged that in fact the tension or dialectic in the relation of Christ and culture needs deeper understanding. Dialogue with indigeneous religions was approached with great interest and less name-calling. A close study of the confessions of the Reformed churches indicates the intrusion of various cultures in language and thought forms.

Put this in a different way as Th. Jorgensen did: Luther in his reformation fought for the one true catholic church of Christ, and this church is to be found everywhere where Christ is preached, so that man becomes justified by faith. This is an event, not a doctrine. The doctrine reflects this event. It does it by means of philosophical and theological categories of the present time and by means of human experience, expressed in different human relations. That is, doctrine or theology interprets and reflects the event of the saving presence of Christ by means of the cultural context.

The proponents of African theology have been acutely aware that the primary sources are the Bible and oral theology, as well as the traditional religions of our multifarious communities.

## II

From the perspective sketched above, my reaction to Won Yong Ji's paper is to compliment him on the fervour of his explication of the various articles. I have nothing to add since it is a field where specialists have grazed for donkey's years. In 1966 such a group consisting of George W. Forrell, Henry Stob, Conrad Bergendoff, John Leith and many others gathered in Princeton and produced what P.C. Empie and James McCord edited into a book called Marburgh Revisited.

What I find missing in Won's paper is the ideological perspective and the Korean context. I would have liked to compare notes on how the Korean and the African see the A.C. in the modern times.

As an illustration: Won poses the modern man's problem as to whether God exists. I lived in North America in the 1960s when the death of God debate was raging. Then I visited home in 1966 and was surprised that people were not concerned with such questions. They sounded distant and abstruse. The technological, individualist, anomic, and other psychological factors which fueled the debate were non-existent.

The truth of the matter is that we live with a different world-view. Our world is suffused with spiritual forces, agents, and sometimes enemies of the Supreme Being. Existence is a precarious harnessing of the good spirits to fight off the bad ones. Perhaps this is to put crudely a line of thinking which I have argued in greater detail elsewhere (see O.U. Kalu "Precarious Vision: The African's Perception of his World" in my Readings in African Humanities, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978. This traditional worldview has persisted as many people (Christians and non-Christians) in moments of crisis easily resort to the spirits, which control space-time events.

I asked a Cameroonian pastor recently what was the most crucial pastoral problem he faced. He replied that there was a growth of secret societies.

In such contexts, theological discourse must relate to missiology. The message of the A.C., or rather the affirmation of God's control of the whole oikumene, is crucial.



Similarly, the concept of sin must be related to both the Bible and the worldview because ethics cannot be hermeneutic.

I am merely drawing attention to a method of approaching the doctrinal affirmations of the confessio so that it could be useful in the missiological and theological dialogue between Christianity and our worldviews. In my own context, the urgent enterprise is how to indigenize Christianity so that it can speak to the real needs of my people.

## Church, Ministry, and Sacraments

### A Roman-Catholic Response

by

Dr. John Tong

1. Dr. Jackayya in his paper clearly introduces his readers to what the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments mean according to the Augsburg Confession (A.C.). In addition to indicating effectively the content of the A.C., he also leads us step by step to an understanding of the relationship between this and the condition of our present age. It is indeed a paper using the theological method and offers tremendous help for the reflection of Christians today.
2. Reading between the lines, we cannot help but notice Dr. Jackayya's concern for an open attitude to intra-church relations, the relationship between one church and another, between the church and other religions, and between the church and society in general. In fact, if we were to compare the paper's rich content with the documents of Vatican II, we would find very little that is dissimilar. I feel certain that this paper and its standpoint not only fit right into the ecumenical spirit, but also facilitate the dialogue with other religions and their respective cultures. As a Catholic, I should particularly praise the three points on the ministry brought out and developed by Dr. Jackayya which are:
  - 1) The office of the ministry is for the purpose of creating justifying faith through preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments.
  - 2) It is the Holy Spirit who works such a faith through the Gospel.
  - 3) But no one should preach or teach or administer the sacraments without a call.

However, some points mentioned by Dr. Jackayya in the paper need further explanation. For example, on p.26, III.2, he said "No one can claim that the salvation of mankind lies within the Church. Today we cannot accept 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus' (there is no salvation outside the Church)". Of course, this is a correct statement, but it needs explanation: otherwise some would think there is no need of the church and consequently of Christ's salvation. On p.28, d. he quotes the words of M. Zaccariah: "The church...should be a peoples' movement". Such a statement also needs clarification, because a people's movement is always changing. How then can we find the "identity of the church", in other words, should the norm of the church be Christ and the Apostles? How are we to put the change and the identity together? Besides, the paper has too many quotations with too few personal comments.

3. Because the sub-title of this paper is: "A Study of the Augsburg Confession in the Asian Context", I was eagerly looking for an actual application to Asian problems in connection with this theological study on "Church, Ministry and Sacraments". I must confess I was somewhat disappointed as the paper did not expound this area at any length. Could it be that

Dr. Jackayya himself is an Asian and therefore understands the Asian problems thoroughly and feels there is no need for a detailed account in this regard? I, however, feel that this could hardly be left out. Please note that nearly all the countries in Asia, Japan excepted, are Third World countries. They have many characteristics in common some of which are: a) their living standard is exceptionally low; b) their skills are poor; c) their staple products are agricultural; d) in their business dealings, they always come up with a deficit; e) they possess rich natural resources; f) they have inherited a religious and cultural tradition. It is really this last-mentioned quality that gives meaning to the Asian people's existence on earth. Moreover, Asia was once upon a time the target of oppression by American and European colonial powers. True enough, there were many zealous missionaries who left their homes and their countries to work for the spiritual welfare of the people they came to serve. We look on their zeal with a sense of awe. Despite that, those missionaries could hardly escape the then ambiguous historical situation. Many a time they cooperated with the colonial powers and turned the church into an ally in the colonial process. Besides, missionaries in general, consciously or unconsciously, felt that to proclaim the Christian faith was to take the whole system of the American and European church, just as it was, and transplant it in their missionary land. Alas, this "foreign" act alienated from their neighbours the new converts, who had to follow their newly acquired foreign religion. The same was true of the church organization and the study of theology. While their sense of patriotism and their spirit of revolution were aroused as they faced the foreigners pillaging their countries, the preaching of the Good News became the instrument of pacification, the medium for taming the thinking and the culture of the converts. Though the Christian faith of the various churches came from Christ, churches are composed of men, weak and limited in many ways by society and culture. These Christian followers clearly reveal a pilgrim people and people of God who yet sin unceasingly. Therefore, when we reflect on the theology of the Church, the Ministry, and the Sacraments according to the A.C., I feel that not only must we search for the true spirit of Luther and his essential doctrine for today, but we must also take a step forward and ask ourselves questions like the following: What are the actual problems of Asia? How can we rid ourselves of the disgraceful name of a foreign church? How can we make our local church a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating church? How can we dialogue with and transform our local culture in the church? And lastly, how can we make our church a constructive force in the society? In short, the core is: the church must not only fit into the present age, but must also lead it.

4. Therefore the above questions trigger this thought. An additional point must be added to the theological paper of Dr. Jackayya: we cannot stop at "Beyond Luther to modern Luthers"; we must add: "Beyond modern Luthers to future Luthers or churches". The reason for this addendum is: History is a flowing stream connecting the past, the present and the future. Just as the A.C. was able to look squarely at earlier important problems and point out the needed direction for today, so too, if we could now point to where the Church, Ministry and Sacraments are to go in the future, we could consider that we have developed fully the true spirit of the A.C.

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD  
A LATIN AMERICAN RESPONSE

by

Walter Altmann (Brazil)

Dr. Hutagalung has presented us a lecture characterized by thorough research, deep knowledge of the Lutheran Confessions, and challenging remarks and questions. I want to make clear that my reaction is to be seen as part of a fraternal dialogue between people of the same faith, reflecting a common Lutheran tradition and similarity of experience in a Third World country, in spite of the most evident differences between our churches and continents. I am most grateful for the invitation extended to me to participate in this symposium and am sure that I will learn much more than I will be able to contribute. I consider this opportunity as a portent of further Lutheran theological exchange between Third World countries, which should be developed, and hope to be able to say welcome to at least some of you on some future occasion in Latin America, perhaps in my home country, Brazil.

As to Dr. Hutagalung's lecture, I agree fully with most of its content, as will be pointed out. Some of the differences we may have are due to the differing contexts from which we come. A few actual differences may exist. One of these could be the methodological approach. I was very much pleased with the formulation of the theme "The Church in the World", rather than "The Church and the World". Dr. Hutagalung dealt adequately with it, when, for example, he rejected a dualistic understanding of the so-called "two kingdoms doctrine" and stressed the necessity for the church to speak and witness to the world, including temporal authorities (II 11-13). Yet if the church is in the world, I would find it more accurate to start with a description of the particular world we live in, to listen to the Gospel and our Confessions within that framework, and thus to receive comfort and be challenged by our Lord. Neither would I have chosen to structure the theme, "The Church - the world - the church in the world". Therefore I do not agree that the study of the A.C. and a self-examination by the Lutheran churches must come before necessary changes or public witness and prophetic action, as suggested in the introduction. Since studying the A.C. and self-examination are permanent tasks of the church, I fear that in this way we could never come to the very task of the church, which is to be an obedient instrument of God's service to the world.

But I do not want to overemphasize this. Ultimately it is a circular process, by which we maintain in constant relation and tension the word of God and the world. And I do recognize that Dr. Hutagalung stresses the necessity of a new understanding of and complements to and even amendments of the A.C. according to different situations and contexts. At any rate, let me start with the Latin American situation and it may become clearer why, for me, another approach is difficult.

### The Latin American Background

Latin America, as it exists today, is the result of a tragically successful process of colonization. Spaniards and Portuguese came to the "New World" with a deep consciousness of their own superiority in relation to the native populations of the American continent. They were convinced that by imposing their superior culture they could legitimate the exploitation of natural wealth (for example gold and silver) and the forced employment of native peoples as slaves. When these resisted, they were annihilated and often replaced by black slaves imported from Africa. This process lasted for centuries and in modified forms continues today. To give an example: at the time of Brazil's discovery (1500) there were an estimated four to five million Indians in Brazil; there are no more than 200,000 today. Even if in other Latin American countries there still are rather larger Indian populations (most countries on the Pacific coast), they have been subdued by the dominant whites, and their peoples are divided by boundaries set up in accord and with the interests of the early Spaniards. The existing miscegenation is not a result of racial democracy but of dominance, making it difficult, sometimes almost impossible, for the dominated races to accept their own identity and struggle for equality. Although most of the immigrants who came to Latin America, for example to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, from Europe in the last century (and also from some Asian countries, especially Japan, in the 20th century) were poor themselves, they took the working and living place in the farming areas and the developing industries which would have been occupied by the still poorer native and black peoples.

At any rate, as a tragic result of this centuries-long process, Latin America must be considered today a part of the western world. But it is also part of the Christian world, since the process of Christianization went hand in hand with the process of colonization. Spain and Portugal intended to set up and spread the project of "cristiandad" (Christianity) values. They saw the Christian faith as the most profound reason for their own superiority. Catholic priests and missionaries were sent as functionaries of the Spanish and Portuguese kings through the system of patronage. This history is one of the profound reasons for the necessity of a liberation theology. It is true that there were priests and missionaries (among them some who came to Asia), who were conscious that the Christian faith cannot be dependent on the colonial power and who tried to break the "cristiandad" project and to protect native and black populations. But usually the sword and the cross were faithful allies.

This is by no means a problem peculiar to Latin America under Catholic influence. Even if the process of colonization in the United States (and Canada) was different, the consequences of the "American dream" for native populations were quite similar. However, the North American system has become dominant not only in that country, but also in the whole world. This socio-political-economic role is probably the reason why there is such a great resistance to the questions of dominance, dependence and liberation, in the developed countries, their churches and theology.

In this context, Latin American liberation theology is also a theology of repentance -- and this aspect is often left aside. This is also why I cannot adopt a doctrinal approach in the sense that I would first research the doctrine and afterwards apply it to our situation. However, with this context, taken into adequate consideration, theology will be done -- much of it in accordance with the Reformation -- in the spirit of daily repentance, so well pointed out by Luther in his 95 theses. It will not forget the Reformation's often harsh critique of the institutional church, while at the same time reflecting that, for church unity, according to the A.C., it is sufficient to agree upon the preaching of the Word of God and the correct administration of the Sacraments. Nor will it neglect the judging dimension of the Word of God inherent in the Lutheran concept of Law and Gospel. And thus it will give due importance to the clause contained in the A.C. XVI that we need to obey God more than human authorities. Seen from our situation, a line of interpretation of the A.C. which accepts more or less uncritically established church and world institutions must be rejected as a temptation which has no actual support in the true Lutheran tradition.

#### The Church in the World - Some Comments

I do not consider Dr. Hutagalungs' position to be in line with the conservative interpretation mentioned above. I realize that much of the Asian context is certainly implicit in his lecture and is so perceived by Asian hearers themselves. But several points are explicitly stated in the latter part of the lecture and, since time is short, I would like to center my comments on this part.

1. First I realize that the Asian reality with its great diversity of cultures, religions, ideologies, and social and political systems is much more complex even than the Latin American one. If we add to this the minority status of Christians in almost all Asian countries, it becomes quite clear that we do need to speak of "a necessity of prime order for unity among the churches to be able to speak with authority to the world" (III 14). Even in Latin America where Christians are an overwhelming majority, we feel the necessity for this unity, since the various churches are faced with the same challenges of unbelief, misuse of Christian faith, and social needs. On the other hand, with the great variety of settings and situations in Asia, I can also see the necessity of "freedom within the churches" in liturgical matters and church government (III 15). I think this double polarity of "unity among the churches" and "freedom within the churches" was very well taken by Dr. Hutagalung (see also I 3, second paragraph), and, indeed, the A.C.'s concept of the church is most helpful in this respect, when it distinguishes between what is essential and what is of secondary nature in the church. It is indispensable to remind ourselves that institutions in general, including the institutional churches, tend to the opposite procedure: to diminish internal freedom and to renounce unity with those who are different. In this respect, we still have much to recover of the ecumenical intention and "tolerant" expression of the A.C.

2. Secondly, one more word about the institutional church: the lecture has well shown that the distinction made in the A.C. by the use of the well-known terms *satis est* and *nec necesse est* was meant as a "renewal and correction" (I 3). I fear that we often draw the opposite conclusion, namely, since the ceremonial and institutional aspects are not necessary for the unity of the church, we can accept them uncritically as they are. This certainly is a misuse of the A.C.'s statement. For this reason I think we must understand the A.C. in the following sense: while differences in ceremonies and of an institutional nature should not keep us from unity, when they are not contradictory to the Gospel, this should not prevent us asking ourselves self-critically what are the most adequate institutional forms and ceremonies in a given situation. Where a church is not able to exercise freedom, the Gospel does not reign, and consequently the *satis est* requirement has not yet been fulfilled. This is an aspect I would like to add to the lecture's consideration.
3. Furthermore, I have found Dr. Hutagalung's comments on the Christian Church and the State very pertinent (for example II 10). The lecture stressed the importance of the Lutheran understanding of vocation as a call to faithful Christian presence in "daily secular work", as well as in the realm of the social, economic, and political order (III 16). As the lecture put it, this represented a liberation at a time "when the secular sphere was subordinate to the spiritual" (III 17). I found it most challenging that the setting of Asian spirituality and religiosity presents an analogy with the situation in the time of the Reformation, which gives immediate relevance to the clear call for participation in secular life contained in A.C. XVI. It seems to me that we have had in Latin America only apparent analogies in situations where the church and state were closely linked. In fact, however, the church was willingly subordinated to dominating economic and political interests. And we see today that while the different dictatorial regimes with their own ideologies (of national security) like to call themselves Christian, in fact they try to evade completely any prophetic call coming from the church, which they attempt to confine to the "spiritual" order.

This means that we have the very opposite situation from that which the Reformers encountered. (I wonder whether in some Asian countries where secular ideologies have grown this is not also the case). In our circumstances we may not, without betraying the A.C.'s intention, adopt directly article XVI's emphasis on the obedience of the Christian to secular authorities, but rather must take into adequate consideration the limits of this obedience and the question of the legitimacy of given authorities. I feel myself much in agreement with Dr. Hutagalung when he stresses "the responsibility of all civil governments to God's will and call" (III 18), and that the loyalty of the Christians "is always conditional and never absolute" (II 10). Indeed, God's will is the sustaining and well-being of his creation (compare A.C. I and XVI), and the legitimacy of all governments must be measured against this will.

4. This brings me to the next point. I also agree very much with the lecture when it stresses with the A.C. that faith must be active in love and that consequently the "confession of faith is intimately... related to the expression and practice of what one believes about human life in this world: human dignity and rights, abolition of discrimination of all kinds, the realization of justice and peace" (III 15). "Active solidarity" with the needy and the struggle to overcome the causes of need are among the major concerns of Latin American liberation theology. I am also very much in favour of considering the question of possible eventual "just revolution" not in dogmatic and theoretical terms, but rather in terms of people's decision in a particular situation, the task of the church being neither to legitimize nor to prohibit such extreme action by the people, but rather "to sharpen the conscience of the people with the Word of Truth" (III 19), which of course includes working for justice. Having done this, the church should respect the people's decision and remain at their side.

In this respect it is certainly significant and relevant that the A.C. says that "neither institutions nor even theology" constitute the church "but rather and primarily people who have faith in Christ" (I 1). And when we recognize that this people is realistically a mixture of believers and sinners (A.C. VIII) or, even more, with Luther, that the believers are simultaneously just and sinners, we realize how necessary it is for this particular people (the church), freed by the justifying Word of God, to remain closely related to the needs of people in general. One of the most astonishing and admirable developments in the Latin American church is how it has, through numerous so-called basic Christian communities, rediscovered and is rediscovering anew the biblical message. This leads them to repentance for past sins and to full participation in solidarity in the people's struggle for justice.

5. This brings me to the final remark. In this process, the church, precisely because it is also sinful, needs to resort to the foundation and fountain of its life: the Word of God and the Sacraments. The stressing without compromise of any sort this indispensable priority is of course the greatest and most central contribution of the A.C. Far from separating the church from the world, the Word of God and the Sacraments sharpen the church's equally indispensable commitment to the world God has loved so much.



## FINAL REPORT

We have gathered in Hong Kong from 1st to 6th December, 1980, as representatives of our various APATS units in Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Australia for a Luther Studies Symposium. We have had the advantage of the presence of representatives from Latin America, Africa, and Europe, and our study and work have been greatly helped by the wider global perspective which they have brought to bear on our discussion.

The present symposium is the culmination of studies and planning which have taken place during the last few years within the framework of APATS. An APATS workshop conducted in Hong Kong in 1979 and a meeting of the Working Committee held in Hong Kong in March 1980 gave final shape to the objectives and structure of the symposium.

It was natural that in this 450th anniversary year of the Augsburg Confession the theme chosen for the symposium was "The Augsburg Confession in Asia Today". It was intended that the symposium should explore and discover the meaning, significance, and relevance of the Augsburg Confession for the Asian context, share this evaluation at the ecumenical level with other Churches, bring it to bear on the mission of the Lutheran Churches, and apply it at the grass roots level for the promotion of community life and ministry.

Consequently the topics chosen for the lectures at the symposium were intended to present significant aspects of the symposium theme, and writers were requested to reflect not only on an understanding of the Augsburg Confession, but also on a reinterpretation of it in the Asian cultural, political, social, religious, and ecumenical situation.

In keeping with these objectives, the lectures and the reactions to them, the background material on each of the Articles of the Augsburg Confession, specially written for this symposium, as also the plenary and group discussions at the symposium, have confronted us with the task and challenge to attempt an understanding and interpretation of the Augsburg Confession for our Asian context.

We are most grateful that the symposium was so structured that we in this part of the world were able to participate in the observation of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession at a level which embraced many cultures, languages, political and social conditions. The resultant pooling of such a variety of thought and insight, of so many differing problems and concerns, has been an enriching experience.

On the other hand, it has been encouraging and uplifting to rediscover the common heritage that binds us all together in faith, love, and hope, based on the Gospel, grounded in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and ours by the grace of God the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament.

The group reports are the result of the discussions of four groups of participants in the symposium; each group was assigned the task of study and reflection on one of the four presented lectures, together with the reaction to it. It should be noted that these reports are the responsibility of the respective group and that they do not necessarily reflect the thinking or a consensus of the whole symposium. We commend these reports, together with the lectures and the reactions to these, to our Lutheran Churches in Asia for study and discussion at all possible levels, and we ask them to let us have their reactions arising from such study by August 1982.

We realize that in many ways this is only the inauguration of an ongoing process, and future Luther studies will, we hope, continue the work we have been privileged to do during these days of the symposium in Hong Kong.

To this end we recommend the following:

1. That the lectures, the reactions to them and the reports be published and the Asia Secretary DCC of the LWF seek the necessary finance for this purpose.
2. That we encourage the continuation of study and research of the following subjects as previously assigned to the respective countries, i.e.:
 

India:	Local ecumenism and the question of Church and Society
Singapore/Malaysia:	Social responsibility in a multi-racial and multi-religious society
Japan:	Confessing Christ in a cultural context
Hong Kong/Taiwan:	The problem of ancestor worship
Indonesia:	Christianity and Islam The ministry Law and Gospel
Philippines:	The Sacraments
Papua New Guinea:	God, man and the world
Australia:	The role of women in Church and Society
3. That pastors and congregations of our Churches be asked to conduct ecumenical dialogue on the local level and that the Strasbourg Institute be requested to assist and serve.
4. That we promote and implement Luther studies on the local level among pastors and congregations. It is suggested that the study of the Large Catechism could prove to be a very fruitful beginning.
5. That the publication of key words to explain difficult theological concepts for the Asian context should be undertaken, and that Prof. Tokuzen (Japan) initiate this work in consultation with the Continuation Committee which will prepare the next symposium. We ask the Asia Secretary, DCC, to note this as a possible LWF project.

6. That the next symposium be planned to take place in 1982, and a further one in 1983, the anniversary year of Luther's birth. We ask the LWF to budget for these symposiums and also for a meeting of the Continuation Committee which will make necessary preparations. It is suggested that this committee be appointed by the present symposium.
7. That in preparing the program for the next symposium the Continuation Committee note the recommendations made in the group reports.

In conclusion, we thank the LWF very sincerely for making this symposium possible. We have no doubt that great benefits will flow from it for the mission of our Churches.

At the same time we extend warm thanks to the Hong Kong Lutheran Churches Association and its local people for the kind and gracious hospitality they showed to us and for so much else they organized and arranged for us, so that the symposium was able to run smoothly and successfully.

And we thank those who conducted devotions for us each morning and so gave spiritual direction to our work and thought.

Finally we thank Dr. Chiu (Hong Kong) and Dr. Hebart (Australia) for guiding us through the intricacies of our discussions and for summing up our thinking and recommendations.

## Group Reports

### Group 1

Discussion on

### THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN ASIA TODAY

(Prof. Y. Tokuzen)

In Asia, the Lutheran Churches with a few exceptions belong to minority Church groups. Asia has a variety of cultures and religions. Thanks to modern mass media and quick transport, the various countries of Asia get to know each other in detail. Though in the majority of countries Christianity is tolerated, the propagation of the Gospel is forbidden and restricted in some.

Asia is rapidly changing and it eagerly welcomes science and technology. Nevertheless, it is reluctant to abandon its age-old religious traditions. Though Asia does not openly acknowledge either the direct or indirect influence of Christianity, the ethical ideals of the Christian faith are being slowly accepted as good norms in many areas. It is the duty of the Lutheran Churches to equip their members to preach the Gospel in purity to non-Christian fellow citizens, in a way understandable to them. Unless Asian Christians prepare today to meet the spiritual needs of their community of tomorrow, they are not fulfilling the task to which they are called by their Creator.

The Lutheran Church stands between the Churches that put human traditions above the Bible, on the one hand, and the extreme bibliolators, on the other hand. It has the task of interpreting the Bible in the light of its central message, which is that we become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith (A.C.4).

The courage of those who signed the Augsburg Confession is a model to Lutherans to witness to the Gospel without compromise in any situation.

Some of the Asian Churches are careless about checking whether their teaching or preaching is in harmony with the central message of the Bible. In the Asian milieu the A.C. is a good guide to interpreting the Bible for all Christians.

Asians are a worshipping community. For them worship is an aspect of spiritual discipline and it is done to please the deities and to derive favours. They do not consider whether their object of worship is worth worshipping. A.C. 1 declares in clear terms the One who alone should be worshipped.

Sin in Asia is much more the violation of religious and other traditions than the violation of the rights of the neighbour and the holy will of God. A.C. 2 points to the total depravity of sinful mankind in the sight of God. One cannot see one's dirt unless one comes to the light. The seriousness of sin is made known as one comes closer to the sinless one. Though some Asians accept Jesus as the "Guru" (teacher, prophet or ethical model),

they fail to recognize their sinfulness and the need for the Saviour, Jesus Christ. A.C. 3 restates the important doctrine of the inseparable divinity and humanity of Jesus.

Asian religions stress auto-salvation. For the majority of Asians, religion based on law or teaching that righteousness is earned through works or rituals is more appealing. As against this, A.C. points out the futility of human efforts to achieve this. Unless the Gospel is preached in its purity, viz. without being mixed with law, Christ's salvific activity is misunderstood. Here, too, the A.C. serves as a constant guide, not only for Lutherans but also for other Christians.

The A.C. is a witness to the very heart of Scripture. As such it is relevant for all times in all places. In the mission context the A.C. points out the falsification of God's revelation in the faiths of non-Christian religions.

The A.C. should be studied more often, along with its Apology and other writings in the Book of Concord. The teaching and preaching of the Church should reflect the spirit of the A.C. The A.C. should be presented in such a way also to the non-Christians in Asia, so that they can understand the clear Christian doctrines. The A.C. paves the way to doctrinal unity among Christians who are a small, divided minority in Asia. At the same time, the A.C. does not emphasize organizational unity, but gives freedom in the area of worship and administration. The distant time factor and the historical context of the A.C. do not hinder the Asian Lutheran Christians from accepting the A.C. as their confession. The A.C. should be printed along with detailed relevant explanations that suit the area where it is printed. Asian Lutherans thank God for the A.C. but for this Confession the different Lutheran Churches would have become syncretistic pseudo-Christian sects. It is astounding to know that non-Lutheran Churches are being slowly influenced by the A.C.

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## Group 2

Discussion on

### THE LIVING GOD AND THE NEW HUMANITY

(Dr. Won Yong Ji)

The objectives of the speaker on "The Living God and the New Humanity" were to supply: (1) an accurate perception of the topic in the light of the Augsburg Confession (AC) (as *norma normata*) and the Holy Scriptures (as *norma normans*); and (2) a proper application of the topic to our current life and its circumstances.

The most basic problem for human living in the contemporary world involves, on the one hand, the relationship with God and all he has created, and on the other, humanity's individual and collective awareness, understanding, and expression of itself.

Is God at all present and active in contemporary humanity's plight?  
Does he care what happens to the human being?

The answer which the A.C. draws from the Scripture in reply to these questions of theology and anthropology deals with activities within history: God's creation, and humanity's self-distortion and self-degradation. But in Christ, the "Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16b), God has effected a "new creation" for humanity (2 Cor. 5:17).

A.C. Article I reflects the history and theology of the Church's teaching on the Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- the unique, self-existent, living God, the starting-point of the Christian faith, who is known in Jesus Christ and revealed in the Scriptures.

Theological writers in the West and the East describe God from various perspectives: in the role of cosmic Lord; in his involvement in the individual human's immediate existence; in his activity in history - past, present, and future. Each of these approaches - cosmic, existential, and historical - contributes understanding; none by itself gives the whole picture.

To leave God out of consideration is to act as an atheist. Equally, depriving the fellow human being of his rightful place in the picture is another form of atheism.

Both how God is seen from the point of view of humanity, and how God views the human being, become clear in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, true God and most authentically human.

Newness (recreated newness!) for humanity comes all from God's initiative and God's action in Christ (A.C. II, IV, VI, XX). Contrary to secular humanistic and millenarian views, only *en Christo* establishes a basis for the "old man" to become new. This "connection with" Christ comes from Christ himself through the Holy Spirit - objectively by the means of grace, the Gospel, and the Sacraments, subjectively by faith.

Although all humanity since the Fall is profoundly enmeshed in sin (A.C.II), human redemption has come through the substitutionary work of God's own Son (A.C. III). God loves humanity, singly and collectively, by grace, for Christ's sake (A.C.IV). A.C. IV's *coram Deo* refers back to A.C. I; its *homines* to A.C. II; *propter Christum* to A.C. III; and *per fidei* is defined in A.C. V. God declares us just; we are free. God has given us a new start. We are a new humanity and a new community of his people. The living God is present with us where we are; he does care. In the new existence, moreover, we have a new task. The Lord sends us into the world for confessing, witnessing, and caring for others.

In reaction to the paper on "The Living God and the New Humanity", the point was raised that for linguistic, cultural, and other historical reasons, what the A.C. says concerning the living God and new humanity will communicate much less meaning to the people of many countries in the world today, and the dimensions and the potential of the new humanity will not be seen with sufficient clarity, if they are described only

in universal terms, or only *in abstracto*, apart from a particular context. Proper application of what we teach on the living God and the new humanity requires its exposition in particular and *in concreto*, in the tension and dialectical confrontation between the Scriptures as the normative source; traditional religion and culture; theological traditions; popular theology transmitted orally; and the missiological goals of the Church. Even in the discussion of such a topic in an international, multi-ethnic forum such as this symposium, understanding of the topic would be facilitated and greatly enhanced by presentation in the concrete terms of specific cultural settings and backgrounds.

### Recommendation

Group II recommends to the plenary that the study of "The Living God and the New Humanity" could well be continued in the following way. In preparation for commemorating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther in 1483, APATS should hold a symposium in 1982 in which participants would be assigned to study further the topic of the new humanity in Christ in the light of Luther's writings, while other participants would respond with presentations on the *in concreto* application of this theme in the life and situation of each APATS region. The fruits of the symposium could then be edited as a useful APATS publication for the anniversary year 1983.

Additionally, other themes dealt with in the present symposium, such as the themes of sin, ethics, and unity, could be fruitfully taken up for further study and development as to their meaning and application in the concrete situation of particular cultural and sociological settings within the APATS area.

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### Group 3

#### Discussion on CHURCH, MINISTRY AND SACRAMENTS

(Dr. B.H. Jackayya)

The paper on "Church, Ministry and Sacraments" by Dr. B.H. Jackayya questioned a Lutheran inclination toward an individualistic and spiritualistic understanding of Church and Sacraments. He directed us to the communal and world-related character of the Church, its ministry and sacraments. Dr. Jackayya did not intend to present an exposition of the A.C. articles touching on these subjects, but attempted on the basis of an understanding of the Luther background of the A.C. to move forward to insights gained through today's rediscovery of Luther.

#### 1. Church

The understanding of the Church as the people of God directs us beyond seeing the Church merely as the place into which individuals

are drawn for salvation. We must see the Church as a pilgrim people called to be God's end-time community, which serves as the place of God's presence in the world and as a sign of God's eschatological purpose for the world.

The "marks" of the Church in A.C. 7, understood in the light of the Christological and soteriological thrust of the A.C. emerge as signs of the Church's ecumenical character. The Church which purely preaches the Gospel and rightly administers the Sacraments is thereby constrained to realize the Lord's gift of oneness and to carry out the Lord's mission to the world.

## 2. Ministry

In order to bring people to faith, God has established the ministry of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. This ministry belongs to the entire Church and is an essential function of the Church in the service of the Word. The office of the ministry may take various forms according to the needs of the Church and its context. We must recognize the need of the Church in each place, i.e. in each congregation, for a full ministry of preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. The varied ministries of the pastor are not independent ministries (e.g. preaching, teaching, counselling), but are all aspects of the one ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Lutheran Churches normally ordain to the ministry candidates who have fulfilled a high standard of formal education. Under certain circumstances lay people are appointed to the ministry of preaching the Gospel but not to the administering of the Lord's Supper. Traditionally we emphasize the sacramental character of the Lord's Supper, in which the exalted Lord Jesus Christ gives himself to his people together with all the gifts of His Spirit.

However we should recognize that the Eucharist has also a social dimension. The Lord's Supper draws the participants into fellowship with Christ Jesus and relates them to the whole of society and the world. Therefore the Eucharist is a true sign of the unity of all believers and at the same time a sign of Christ's uniting all things in himself at the eschaton.

We recognize that it is the Lord who invites us to his table. The Lord's Supper thus expresses the unity of Christ's people and at the same time serves as a means to unity. It signifies Christ's desire to draw all people to himself and directs those who gather around the table to turn toward the world in service and witness.

We recognize various problems in regard to inter-communion. Mutual recognition of Lutherans in administering the Lord's Supper should be an *a priori* assumption, though regrettably this is not the case throughout the Lutheran Church. The question of inter-communion between Lutherans and other denominations is handled differently according to the situation and the traditions involved. Since



it is the Lord who invites us to his table, it is in principle open to all believers.

#### Recommendations:

We recommend that the LWF and all APATS units initiate further study on

1. the nature and meaning of ordination;
2. the problem of "unbaptized believers" and in this connection the practice of infant baptism;
3. the Eucharist in its significance for the Church and the world;
4. intercommunion among Lutherans and intercommunion with other churches.

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#### Group 4

#### Discussion on THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD (Dr. S.M. Hutagalung)

##### 1. The World

- a. In his lecture Dr. Hutagalung has very ably dealt with the "world" from a number of perspectives: the world as the sum total of creation; the world as the orders of human existence; a hostile world claimed by Christ; the world of governments, etc. The group feels that in current Asian contexts the world of governments, of rulers, of power and authorities should be given greater emphasis and importance in our whole understanding of the Asian "world". For it is often in this area of power struggles between conflicting rules and authorities that the Church is challenged to give courageous witness to the Risen Christ who alone is the supreme and ultimate power and authority. While the A.C. tends to take lawful governments and legitimate rules for granted, people in Asia are calling into question the very legitimacy of many so-called governments and regimes. The relevance of the A.C. on this matter is to be seen by the ways that peoples in various Asian contexts understand the nature of these governments and regimes. The group realizes that this is a very complex and vital issue in Asia today.
- b. The Asian "world" must also be seriously reckoned with, not just politically, but also economically, as the arena for the gigantic and effective operation of some multinational corporations. The group wants to draw special attention to their monopoly of the Asian market; the exploitation of cheap Asian labour as well as their often unfair pricing of raw materials produced in Asia. Even the terms of loans contracted between the underdeveloped or deloping nations in Asia and some of the international monetary agencies are not often in the interests of the borrowing nations. The group observes that economically speaking the

South-East Asian "world" is very much a "Japanese world". The dehumanizing effects of economic and industrial developments in Asia are also dealt with.

- c. Asia is not only the seat of great religions, but a whole gigantic world of traditional religiosity, expressed in various forms and styles, which determines the worldview of Asian peoples. This worldview consequently governs and dictates their thinking and actions, as religion is often a way of life for peoples, whether they are Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, animists, or others. Articles 16 and 28 of the A.C. deal specifically with the doctrine of the two kingdoms or the two governments of God. With a religion such as Islam, in which the "religious" and the "secular" are intimately interwoven, could the A.C. meaningfully and relevantly talk about the doctrine of the two kingdoms and of the two governments?
- d. The world is often, if not always, taken to be the world of men, whether deliberately or otherwise. The Christian understanding of the created order and God's original purpose for humanity demand that we give women their rightful place in all world affairs, in the end making the world the arena of true partnership and stewardship between the two sexes.

## 2. Repentance

As to the matter of repentance, the group feels that there is clearly a need for the Asian Churches to repent. About the particular areas for which the Church ought to repent in the present Asian contexts, the group humbly suggests that there is need for repentance on the part of those Churches which have been living too comfortably and complacently in the middle-class world instead of identifying more closely with the poor and disadvantaged majority of Asia. There is also need for repentance for our uncritical acceptance of traditional Western thought-forms, mentality, Church structure and life-style, which have often rendered the Churches rather ineffective and not credible in their witness and mission in the world and even caused alienation between these Churches and the larger communities of the societies.

## 3. The Two Marks of the Church

The "two marks" of the Church are stated in the A.C. as the pure preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments according to the Gospel. But how is the "purity" of the Gospel to be preached and how are the sacraments "rightly administered"? The group is of the opinion that the "purity" of the Gospel should not be understood only in terms of verbal communication or propositional formulation of doctrines and theologies, but more in terms of faithful and courageous proclamation as well as in the actual living-out of the demands of the Gospel. The Gospel is the power (*dynamis*) of God for salvation to everyone

who has faith (Rom. 1:16). This dynamic understanding of the "purity" of the Gospel is most vital for our witness and mission in Asia today. Only in this "pure preaching" does the Gospel become the "good news" of man's salvation in Christ so that his Lordship is gladly and humbly acknowledged and accepted. The sacrament of baptism should not be understood merely in terms of the individual's initiation into the Church but more as the authentic sign and powerful means of grace through which the Christian is fully incorporated into Christ. It is this incorporation into Christ that gives meaning to the Church as a community in fellowship both with and in Christ. However, this community in fellowship does not exist for itself but for God and for others and should thus relate itself to the whole human community in witness and service. Similarly, Holy Communion should not be interpreted merely in sacramental and liturgical terms, but also in terms of the divine incarnation and the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus emphasizing the "real presence" of Christ with us. It is this Christ, remembered, present, and received in and through Holy Communion, who transforms the Church into a clear sign of God's redeeming grace and hope in the very midst of suffering peoples.

#### 4. The Confession of Faith of the H.K.B.P. in Indonesia

The formulation of the Confession of Faith of the H.K.B.P. raises a most basic question for the A.C. Does the felt need for a H.K.B.P. Confession itself reflect the inadequacy of the A.C.? Or is the H.K.B.P. Confession a contextualizing attempt on the part of an Asian Lutheran Church to formulate a living faith of its own? The group recognizes both the A.C. and the H.K.B.P. Confession as respective faithful witnesses to the historic Christian faith. Moreover, as far as the Lutheran World Federation is concerned, the H.K.B.P. Confession is taken to be "in essential agreement" with the A.C. But it is still not altogether clear to some Churches as to how this "essential agreement" is to be understood precisely. The group feels that the dynamics of the social, political, religious, and cultural backgrounds which originally promoted the formulation of the H.K.B.P. Confession must be grasped. In brief, we consider the H.K.B.P. Confession as a bold and genuine attempt on the part of a national Lutheran Church to be what a national Church should be in its life and witness in a particular context. However, as a historical document now, even this confession itself needs to be reinterpreted in the ever changing context of Indonesia, in the end making it a more effective witness to the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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II

LUTHER'S THOUGHT ON NATURE AND THE NATURAL IN THE  
ASIAN CONTEXT

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# Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Classical Asian Religions

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## Introduction

Among Western theologians, the recent upsurge of interest in the world of nature, particularly in relation to creation and cosmology, is timely.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, church people assign the natural to scientists, and the supernatural to theologians. Such an outlook has exposed theology to conflicting criteria; for Christian faith includes beliefs about the relations between God and the world.<sup>2</sup> Hence dualistic ontology could prove damaging to the church, and ironically, help to bring science and theology into greater conflict.

Incidentally, such a conflict, or the *chōrismos* between the *kosmos aisthētos* and *kosmos noētos* in its Hellenistic form, was not inherent in Christian thought. In wrestling with the Platonic concept of *to holon* or *to pan*, which greatly interested the gnostics, Irenaeus argued that our world could not be a closed system, since Lord God the Creator is "totally the source of all good things",<sup>3</sup> and that through his Son, "all things were created, up-held, and redeemed."<sup>4</sup> Or take another divine, Athanasius. In his struggle with the Arians, he identified two sets of names. The trinitarian names denote the very transcendent Being of God.<sup>5</sup> The other set denotes the immanent will and act which are toward the world, and it is through the continuous action of God that the world is maintained in existence.<sup>6</sup> Thus their world is distinctively holistic and sacramental, in contrast to the dualistic *Weltanschauung* of their time.

Unfortunately, the history of dogma also witnesses a Babylonian captivity of theology from the era of Augustine onward. And via the Medieval Scholastic metaphysics, this dualism came back and has gripped Western thought ever since. With dualism undetected, one can hardly do justice to the created world. Either one tends to retreat from the physical world and in-

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1. In addition to the numerous works by notables such as Karl Heim, Charles E. Raven, Stanley Jaki, Thomas F. Torrance, and A.R. Peacocke, some recent publications may be added: G.S. Hendry, *Theology of Nature* (The Westminster Press, 1980); Roger L. Shinn, ed., *Faith and Science in an Unjust World*, report of the WCC Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, held at MIT, USA, 12-24 July, 1979 (WCC, 1980); A.R. Peacocke, ed., *Science and Theology in the Twentieth-Century*, from the Oxford International Symposium, held at Christ Church in Sept., 1979 (Notre Dame University, 1981).
2. Cf. A.R. Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 23ff.
3. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, II, 12:3.
4. *Ibid.*, III, 9:3; IV, 14.
5. G. Florovsky, "Concept of Creation in St. Athanasius" *Studia Patristica*, Vol. VI, 1962, p. 48.
6. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 17ff. 41; cf. *Contra Arianos* III, 4; 1:22 III, 30; etc.



dulge in some sort of pietism,<sup>7</sup> or one inclines to take the physical world as an ultimate reality, and takes comfort in various forms of materialism. The intention of this paper is to show that dualism is not an infrastructure of Eastern culture. It is at least possible to locate certain strands of living cultural thought in the East that are unmistakably holistic and non-deterministic. And then, to identify certain common features among these strands that are relevant to our contemporary understanding of nature and the natural. In so doing, we, following theologians of the past, can avail ourselves of the philosophical and religious works that will best serve to express Christian faith in terms that communicate with the secular culture of our time.

The three strands of thought we will study are selected texts from Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism.<sup>8</sup> They are, needless to say, enormously complex systems of thought, each with long and often mutually exclusive traditions. It is, however, neither our ambition to deal with a certain thought in its historical development, nor is it our aim to tackle the textual problem against which a tradition arose. Whatever caution we may take, however, such a broad scope would inevitably result in sweeping statements and over-general discussion. Within a limited space to investigate such a vast subject, it is therefore necessary to state that our aim is to establish a norm rather than to note the particular. The present writer believes that it is such a norm rather than academic particulars that might prove fertile in a missiologically oriented symposium such as ours.

## I. UNDERSTANDING OF THE PHYSICAL REALITY

One of the most important insights of the East is the realization that transformation and change are essential features of physical reality. These often take the form of polarities in unity. Thus logic demands that any faithful representation of the dynamic world should draw upon the total experience within the interrelated web of multi-level rationality. Awareness of the impossibility of fulfilling such a criterion prevents Orientals from describing the world in a definitive or deterministic fashion, and displays the basis of their understanding of physical reality as relative, relational and dynamic.

While affirming the constant Tao in *Tao Te Ching*<sup>9</sup> as the origin and root of all things,<sup>10</sup> the Taoist is particularly obsessed by the problems of change and transformation, expressed by several different technical terms. *Pien*, *hua*, *fan*, *huan*, and *kuei* all indicate the process of transformation, metamorphosis or transmutation, and each can describe either visible phenomena (like seasons) or invisible phenomena (like principles).<sup>11</sup>

7. Strictly speaking, both Barth and Tillich/Bultmann fall into this category. The former, although he had written two fat volumes on the doctrine of creation, offered practically nothing to the scientifically informed person who wants to know what light theology has to shed on the world of nature; while the latter, with their existentialist concern, simply denied that the natural world could be of any importance for one's own being. Cf. Hendry, *op. cit.*, pp. 25ff.

8. Religious practices within Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism individually differ not only from generation to generation, but also from one local shrine to the next; thus there is lacking a common denominator for study such as ours. This is why we use the classical texts of these religions rather than their practices as a basis for this study.

9. Its English translation is taken from W.T. Chan, *The Way of Lao Tzu* (New York, 1963), unless stated otherwise. *Tao Te Ching* is hereafter cited as *TTC*.

10. *TTC*, 52, 6.

11. *TTC*, 29. Also cf. *Chuang Tzu*, 22.

*TTC* sees all change in nature as a manifestation of the dynamic interplay between polar opposites. Everything is seen in terms of its relativity or in a wider relational context to the whole. Hence, pairs of opposite terms abound in *TTC*.<sup>12</sup> All attributes of things are relative and relational, only Tao is absolute and ultimate, and in it all opposites are blended and all contrast is harmonized.<sup>13</sup>

The awareness that all opposites are polar, but also form a unity, is seen as one of the highest aims a follower of Buddhism must pursue. Thus D.T. Suzuki writes, "The fundamental idea of Buddhism is to pass beyond the world of opposites, a world built up by intellectual distinction and emotional defilements, and to realize the spiritual world of non-distinction, which involves achieving an absolute point of view."<sup>14</sup> Such an absolute point of view is reached in the world of *acīnya* (no-thought) where unity of all opposites becomes a vivid experience. But, is it not purely a subjective experience which sounds somewhat unreal in our natural world? Not according to Buddhist ontology. Kūkai, or Kōbō Daishi (774-835), the founder of Japan's Shingon school of Buddhism, regards the older distinction between sentient and insentient beings as inadequate: "In Exoteric Buddhist teachings the four great elements (earth, water, fire and wind, are considered to be non-sentient beings, but in Esoteric Buddhist teaching they are regarded as the *samaya*-body of the Tathagata. The four great elements are not independent of the mind. Differences exist between matter and mind, but in their essential nature they remain the same. Matter is no other than mind, mind, no other than matter. Without any obstruction, they are interrelated."<sup>15</sup>

Such an understanding of physical reality may sound naive to a Newtonian, but perhaps not so to an Einsteinian. Indeed, it was A. Eddington who complained that the basic limitation of our physical schemes lies in the fact that "opposites are represented by + and -. Past and future, cause and effect, are represented in this inadequate way." He continued, "One of the greatest puzzles of science is to discover why protons and electrons are not simply the opposites of one another."<sup>16</sup> At the subatomic level, such puzzles may appear irrational if the framework of opposite concepts, derived from our everyday experience, does not give way to more dynamic concepts. There, particles are both destructible and indestructible, matter is both continuous and discontinuous, and force and matter are but different aspects of the same phenomenon. Perhaps one of the most popular puzzles of modern physics is the behaviour of the photon which acts both as wave and particle. It was Bohr who pointed out that the particle picture and wave picture are two complementary descriptions of the same reality, each of them being only partly correct and having a limited range of application. Each picture is needed to give a full description of the atomic reality, and both are to be applied within the limitation given by the Uncertainty Principle.

12. E.g. hard/soft, action/non-action, strong/weak, male/female, above/below, heaven/earth, etc. In chapter 15 we read, "If we call a thing long, we merely mean longer than something else that we take as a standard. What we take as our standard depends upon what we are used to upon the general scale of size to which we belong." [Taken from A. Waley's translation, *The Way and its Power* (London, 1968).]

13. *TTC*, 2; cf. 36; 22.

14. D.T. Suzuki, *The Essence of Buddhism* (Kyoto, Japan, 1968) p. 18.

15. Quoted in William R. LaFleur, "Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature" in *History of Religion*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Nov. 1973) p. 99.

16. Arthur S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge, 1928) p.338.

Traditionally, knowledge gained by scientists is regarded as exact knowledge, thus carries high credibility; but insight of the same phenomenon gained by mystics is regarded as no more than a personal opinion. But now it is the scientists, particularly the physicists, who have become more aware of the limitation of the kind of knowledge they are up against, namely, that due to the nature of the means of knowing, they are dealing with a restricted aspect of physical reality. Such knowledge cannot claim to be complete, let alone ultimate.<sup>17</sup> If a scientist, or anybody else for that matter, desires a more complete or deeper knowledge of reality, he must constantly subject himself to the compulsion of the object in order that he may think in accordance with its inherent rationality. To set positive science over religious belief as superstitious dogma, in a physicist's view, "is too simple—a kind of unwarranted fundamentalism."<sup>18</sup> This is the same advice given by a Buddhist, Lama Anagarika Govinda, when he writes that "An experience of higher dimensionality is achieved by integration of experiences of different centres and levels of consciousness. Hence the indescribability of certain experiences of meditation on the plane of three-dimensional consciousness and within a system of logic which reduces the possibilities of expression by imposing further limits upon the process of thinking."<sup>19</sup> So, when the mystics try to express this experience in words, they are faced with the same problems as the physicists trying to interpret the multidimensional reality of relativistic physics.

When we turn to the texts of Hinduism, the conception of polarity (of the phenomenal world) in unity (in the Absolute or Brahman) is expressed even more forcefully in two ways: epistemologically and cosmologically.

Firstly, then, is the acknowledgement that our reason transmits a differentiated and often fragmentary world to us, in which we find no inter-relatedness or meaningfulness, no indicator of the ultimate Ground of Being. But "reason alone" has very little meaning for a Hindu, for reason is not isolated from the rest of our human nature. It is not in itself self-sufficient even in the highest forms of knowing. Reason, no doubt, may be an instrument, but it is not effective unless it is properly used. It is the whole man who uses it, and he will use it properly only when he is pure, detached and moral. If and when he uses reason thus, reason becomes an "incarnated" reality in him.<sup>20</sup> So the Indian tradition diagnoses the illness of the atheist not so much in his reason as in his whole nature.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, he who has and correctly uses reason sees the contingency of the world.<sup>22</sup> Brahman is not only the ground of all beings, but actually holds,

17. See A.S. Eddington, *op. cit.*; A. Einstein, *Out of My Later Years* (New York, 1950.).

18. Richard Schlegel, "The return of Man in Quantum Physics" in *Science and Theology in the Twentieth Century*, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

19. Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (Rider, London, 1973), p. 136.

20. See *Mundaka Upanishad* (cited as Mund U) III, 1, 8; (Katha Upanishad (Kath. U) II 9; 20. We shall return to this question in the next section.

21. Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (NY, Orbis Books, 1981 revised and enlarged edition), pp. 128ff.

22. This is a basic presupposition in the Hindu spirit. See various commentaries on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (BG) I, 1, 1 (esp. Sankara, the greatest commentator of all); *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* I; *Yoga-Sūtra* II, 16. The notion of the contingent world will be followed up later.

supports and unites everything that is. As such, it is the life-breath,<sup>23</sup> the food,<sup>24</sup> of all. Underlying all these is the idea of the All,<sup>25</sup> the Reality and Unity of all things,<sup>26</sup> the Real of the real<sup>27</sup> and the One.<sup>28</sup> The cosmological search for the Absolute Being is not a search in an abstract world, a pure philosophizing, but closely related to experience in this world. For it is in this changing and polarized world that a healthy whole man perceives the unchanging ground of all being. The *Isa Upanishad* says, "It moves. It moves not. It is far, and it is near. It is within all this and it is outside of all this."<sup>29</sup>

Nothing, therefore, is in and for itself; each is part of the cosmic web, and everything is involved in the same process of returning to the Origin, be it the Tao, the Tathagata or the Brahman. The general understanding of opposites is that they are no longer seen as antithetical but set in a dynamic context of relativity within which Lao Tzu declares: "to be empty is to be full. To be worn out is to be renewed. To have little is to possess. To have plenty is to be perplexed."<sup>30</sup> To some, these ideas seem nothing more than a play with words, but others discern that the authors are stating that reality is far richer and more complicated than the absolutist scheme of black and white; it is profoundly relative and intrinsically relational to the ultimate. The Orientals' worldview is then, essentially dynamic as opposed to the views of those who prefer a static and deterministic understanding.

## II. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE UNFORMALIZABLE IN THE UNIVERSE

If total experience within the multi-level rationality of the cosmos is a prerequisite of any faithful representation of the dynamic world, it is obvious that such a "total experience", together with a "perfect language" to transmit it can be an ideal, but can never be reached. Hence it is but another way of acknowledging the undefinable elements in the universe that have their own inherent rationality, as well as asserting the limitations of human language and knowledge. In real life most of us cannot constantly be aware of these limitations and of the relativity of conceptual knowledge. It is so much easier to grasp our representation of reality linguistically than to grasp reality itself that we tend to confuse the two and to take our concepts and symbols for reality itself. But essentially, reality transcends the embrace of our rational method and linguistic representation. This is basically a Taoist attitude towards intellectual activity and linguistic capacity. Right from the beginning, then, Lao Tzu warns us against this danger by pointing out the ineffable aspects of reality: "The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name."<sup>31</sup>

23. Cf. *Kausitak Upanishad* (Kaus U) III, 2; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (BU) III, 9, 9; VI, 1, 13.

24. *Taittirīya Upanishad* (TU) II, 2; III, 7-9; *Chāndogya Upanishad* (CU) VII, 9, 2.

25. CU, VI, 12, 3; BU, I, 4, 10.

26. CU, VI, 1, 3-5.

27. BU, II, 1, 20.

28. BU, III, 9, 1-9.

29. *Isa Upanishad* (IsU), 5.

30. TTC, 42.

31. TTC, 1. Cf. Waley's translation which rendered *Ch'ang* as "unvarying", *op. cit.*: p. 141.

The differentiation between name and that which is nameless is important. For some Chinese philosophical schools and also for the Platonic tradition in the West,<sup>32</sup> the correspondence between name and reality is constantly stressed; they accept names as necessary and good. Lao Tzu, while not going so far as Buddhism to condemn names as utterly superfluous, does stress that ultimately reality is nameless, and thus undefinable. When names arise, that is, when the oneness of reality is fragmented into individual named objects, and those names are taken to be reality itself, we misconceive reality. Then is the time for caution. In chapter 41, Lao Tzu uses paradox to show the tension between the name and the nameless. "Great purity appears like disgrace . . . True substance appears to be changeable. The Great square has no corners. The great implement is slow to finish. Great music sounds faint. Great form has no shape."<sup>33</sup> And he concludes, "Tao is hidden and nameless. Yet it is Tao alone that skillfully provides for all and brings them to perfection."<sup>34</sup>

The reluctance to admit that language is capable of conveying reality is not a unique character of Taoism, but is shared by all major Eastern mystical traditions. Hence, the Indian uses myth, the Chinese uses paradox, and the Japanese uses poetic imagery; all are intended to indicate the essentially ineffable character of reality itself. However, it is perhaps Chuang Tzu who has most clearly formulated this Taoist aspect of nature, both in words and in symbolic acts.

Firstly, he declares that "Words are employed to convey ideas, but when the ideas are grasped, men forget the words."<sup>35</sup> He then performs the symbolic act of singing and beating upon a basin to commemorate his wife's death.<sup>36</sup> He intends to show that since death is a fact of life we should not question nature's right to make and unmake in order to fit our preconceived concepts of nature. That we should hanker after some role that nature did not intend us to play is not merely futile and damaging to the tranquillity of the spirit, it involves, in view of our utter helplessness, a sort of fortuity at once comic and disgraceful. Thus, to be in harmony with and not in rebellion against the reality of the universe is the first step on the way to Tao. According to the *TTC*, it is by yielding and not forcing our preconceived ideas on nature that we are able to observe, understand, and thus cooperate with nature.

In what way can this Taoist understanding of the proper relationship between language and reality be applied to the Asian scene? It is a striking fact that philosophers have often acted as though a prerequisite of the world's being put into language and described is that "the structure of the world must be antecedently linguistic."<sup>37</sup> Although slightly over-stated, such a presupposition has given rise to many controversies, both Eastern and Western, ancient and modern. It is evident that language plays sly tricks, especially upon the philosopher and theologian whose medium is language. For them, Lao Tzu's warning is especially relevant. In theological formulation the conditions

32. See H.G. Creel, "The Great Clod" in *What is Taoism*, (Chicago, 1970), pp. 25-36. Here Creel points out that concepts (names) as Plato sees them have almost an ontological parity with reality.

33. *TTC*, 41.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Chuang Tzu*, 26. Cf. the slogan of the semanticist Alfred Korzybski, "The map (concepts or language) is not the territory (reality)".

36. *Chuang Tzu*, 18.

37. Arthur C. Danto, *Mysticism and Morality* (New York, 1972), p. 102.

for adequate description must not encompass parity of form, and once we renounce formal parities we may logically ascribe ineffability to the world and inadequacy to language. As A. Danto rightly stresses, "Lao Tzu is essentially correct when he implies that words, used at least descriptively, are logically external to the reality they record, and that there is a dimension of existence that could not possibly be put in words."<sup>38</sup> This dimension of existence includes the Eternal<sup>39</sup> and the intrinsic rationality of nature,<sup>40</sup> both of which can be indicated, but not confined, by our concepts.

Although both the Three-Treatise School<sup>41</sup> and the Consciousness-Only School<sup>42</sup> of Buddhism in China advocate the philosophy of emptiness, the former insists that dharmas (elements of existence) and their causes are unreal, and the latter teaches the non-existence of the self (*ātman*) and dharmas. The Zen (or Ch'an in China) school is less radical.<sup>43</sup> Whereas the founder of Zen (Bodhidharma) emphasizes the Ultimate Reality or the true nature of dharmas, Hung-jen in China stresses the mind. His two disciples, Shen-hsiu (605-706) in the north, and Hui-neng (638-713) in the south, developed divergent tendencies. Shen-hsiu stressed gradual enlightenment of the mind while Hui-neng stressed sudden enlightenment, but both remained within the Buddhist tradition of idealism and universalism.<sup>44</sup>

In their understanding of Nature through their mind, however, the Northern School teaches that the Buddha-nature of all things may be perceived only by the pure mind which arises from absolute quietude when erroneous thoughts are eliminated; the Southern School insists that the mind cannot be split into parts and that all its activities are a function of True Reality. Consequently, mind together with senses are regarded as one. Unity in, and a manifestation of the Buddha-mind, is everywhere in this world.

That may be so in theory, but in practice, our scrutinizing mind knows the world differently. Thus Shen-hsiu taught the "absence of thought" while others emphasized "forgetting our feelings" and "letting the mind take its own course" so it can be at ease and not be disturbed either by its own differentiated characters or veiled by the phenomenal world. This awareness became all the more sharp during the ninth to eleventh centuries, as reflected in the Zen technique of *koan* (or Kung-an in Chinese), whereby truth or falsehood may be determined. This method often consists of a common question and a shocking or enigmatic answer. Chan cites a case where a pupil asks,

38. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

39. *TTC*, 16: 55.

40. *TTC*, 44: 32.

41. This school was called Mādhyamika (Middle Doctrine) in Sanskrit, was founded in India by Nāgārjuna (c. 100-200 A.D.), and was introduced into China by Mumārājira (344-413), and his pupil Seng-chao (384-414). The "Emptiness" of this school is being identified with Nirvana and the Dharma-body, the Absolute, the Ultimate Void or the Original Substance.

42. The Consciousness-Only School, the most philosophical of Buddhist schools, was founded by Asanga (c. 410-c. 500) in India and introduced to China by Hsüan-tsang (596-664). Both the Three-Treatise School and the Consciousness-Only School dominated the Chinese intellectual scene and rivaled each other from the fifth to the seventh centuries.

43. The origin of this school in China is unclear (see T'ang Yung-t'ung, *Han Wei Liang-Chin Nan-pei-ch'ao Fo-chiao shih* (History of Chinese Buddhism from 206 BC to A.D. 589, Shanghai, 1938, pp. 779-780), but it was Hung-jen (601-674) who brought this school to prominence in China.

44. See W.T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 425-427.

"whenever there is any question, one's mind is confused. What is wrong?" and the answer was "Kill! Kill!" W.T. Chan is correct when he says that it is wrong to think such answers are due to the belief that truth is so mysterious, irrational or paradoxical that only an illogical answer can reveal it. Rather, one should realize that the true nature of our world, endowed by Buddha, is always greater than and thus concealed from our conceptualization.<sup>45</sup> One should then return to his spontaneous mental faculty to look for the answer himself. All the unorthodox methods used by the Zen Masters are but ways, Chan adds, "of shocking the pupil out of his outmoded mental habits and preconceived opinions so that his mind will be pure, clear, and thoroughly awakened . . . so that he sees and grasps truth instantly anytime and anywhere."<sup>46</sup>

In spite of the high intellectual level of these philosophies (particularly the Consciousness-Only School), the intellect for them is seen merely as a means to clear the way for the direct mystical experience which Buddhists call "awakening". The essence of this experience is to pass beyond the phenomenal world of intellectual distinction, to reach the world of *acintya*, the unthinkable that refuses to be formalized into a neat clear system of conceptual knowledge. For reality is essentially multi-dimensional but undivided, an undifferentiated "suchness." Whereas the Chinese Buddhists were superb logicians and interested in pressing their Buddhist universalism to the phenomenal and mundane world as a whole, the Japanese after Kūkai seem to restrict their area of concern to the natural world rather than the whole of mundane reality.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, Kūkai himself also maintains that the reality of the natural world surpasses the compass of the phenomenal, behind and above which lies an ontological union of the Absolute, the *dharmakaya* with the mundane. Thus, in discussing the Buddhahood of all things, sentient and insentient, he writes: "the *Dharmakaya* consists of the Five Great Elements within which space and plants-and-trees are included. Both this space and these plants-and-trees are the *dharmakaya*. Even though with the physical eye one might see the coarse form of plants-and-trees, it is with the Buddhaye that the subtle color can be seen."<sup>48</sup> This also means that the question of how plants-and-trees may achieve Buddhahood has now become the question of how are we to see that plants-and-trees are already endowed with Buddhahood: distinctly an epistemological rather than an ontological question for the knower.

It is common sense indeed that Indian mysticism, and Hinduism in particular, clothes its statements in the forms of myths, using metaphors and symbols, poetic images, similes and allegories to transmit that which transcends sense knowledge and precise description. Such a language is full of magic and of paradoxical situations, and can thus convey the way in which mystics experience reality much better than factual language. According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, "myth embodies the nearest approach to absolute truth that can be stated in words."<sup>49</sup> Some rash missionary may complain that the many gods and goddesses of Hinduism are polytheistic, but the Hindu with deep in-

45. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

46. *Ibid.* For illustration of this method, see *The Platform Scripture. The Basic Classic of Zen Buddhism*, tr. and commentary by W.C. Chan, (St. John's University Press, 1963).

47. William R. LaFleur, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

48. *Kōbō Daishi Zenshū*, Vol. 2, p. 37, tr. by LaFleur, *ibid.*

49. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (N.Y. 1943), p. 33.

sight knows that all these gods are creations of the mind, representing the many faces of reality. They are, in some sense, images to convey the deep experience of reality to the less sophisticated; as such, they are essential vehicles in our understanding of the world.

Even for the well educated, these means are not irrelevant. In fact, if one's mind or intellect is not properly used, one may fare even worse than the less educated for, "Knowledge of the real nature of a thing does not depend on human intellect."<sup>50</sup> It has its own inherent rationality. In other words, "it depends on the thing itself."<sup>51</sup> For a Hindu that "thing" is, of course, Brahman itself, which transcends all our sense knowledge. Thus, Hinduism encourages man to seek and understand the Brahman in this world, a kind of "from below" approach to theology, if his worldview is one of the open type. Sankara quotes the famous text of Varuna in answering his son Bhrgu: "That from which these beings originated, that by which, being originated, they live, and that to which they return; desire to know that; that is Brahman."<sup>52</sup> The *Taittiriya Upanishad* makes it quite clear that for a man to understand the world as it is, i.e. the phenomenal world, is not to be separated from the Absolute Brahman; an unaided mind and the isolated senses would be useless. If we were capable of discovering the nature of Brahman thus, Brahman would not be Brahman any more, but would belong to our nature sphere.<sup>53</sup> "Brahman, beginningless, a supreme: beyond what is and beyond what is not."<sup>54</sup> Or, to take another *Upanishad*, "Incomprehensible is that supreme Soul, unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, unthinkable."<sup>55</sup> It is unthinkable only to those whose world is fragmented, i.e. one who is bound by *karma*. Being free from *karma* means to realize the unity and harmony of all nature (including Brahman and man), and act accordingly,<sup>56</sup> to see reality. "That is Reality. That is *ātman*. That art thou."<sup>57</sup>

In light of a modern understanding of the different orders of rationality in nature then, a theologian, in dealing with the physical realm, is perhaps best advised to bear in mind that the order inherent in the universe is manifold in character. According to Torrance, there are at least four basic modes of rational order: number, logos, organismic form and aesthetic form.<sup>58</sup> It is sometimes the case that when we operate with an unusual combination of two or more of them in some inquiry, we discover new elements in nature which would otherwise have eluded us. This implies that to pursue only one mode of order could be an artificial abstraction. There is an "ontological stratification"<sup>59</sup> in the universe comprising a sequence of rising levels, each higher one controlling the boundaries of the one below it and thereby embodying the joint meaning of the particulars of the lower level. In Polanyi's words this means that "all meaning lies in the higher levels of reality that are not reduci-

50. *The Pañcapādikā of Padmapāda*, tr. into English by D. Venkataramiah, Gaekwad's Oriental Series. 107. Oriental Institute Baroda, 1948.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *TU*, III, 1. Cf. also III, 6.

53. *SU*, III, 4; V, 5; VI, 16.

54. *BG*, 13, 12.

55. *Maitri Upanishad* 1, 4, 6.

56. *BG*, 13, 12.

57. *CU*, 6, 9, 4.

58. Torrance, "Determinism and Free Creation," in *Abba Salama IV* (1976), p. 10.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 11.



ble to the law by which the ultimate particulars of the universe are controlled."<sup>60</sup> Hence, the universe comprises a hierarchy of levels of reality which are open upward but not reducible downward. This means that the universe is essentially an open, heterogeneous system characterized by co-ordinated strata of natural coherences of different kinds, in and through which we discover an uncircumscribed range of rationality.

### III. THE HOLISTIC UNIVERSE

With the realization that physical reality is essentially interconnected and extends beyond human conceptual schematization, it is hardly surprising that the modern scientific worldview is distinctively holistic as opposed to the mechanistic and often fragmentary worldview of the past. Such a cosmological perspective in modern science is closer to the biblical worldview,<sup>61</sup> and is basically that of the East.

Admittedly, mechanistic notions of classical physics are useful for descriptions of daily experience, and they have also proved extremely successful as a basis for technology. The East, on the whole, lacks this stage of development in its thinking and consequently, being at an earlier stage, cannot develop Western-type technology. However, the mechanistic worldview has many limitations. It is not only inadequate for a description of the sub-atomic and astronomic world; some would even hold it responsible for the fragmentary nature of society and culture in the West.

The organismic and holistic worldview of the East in general may not be adapted to constructing machines to cope with technical problems, but it does enable man to glimpse reality more closely, and helps him to lead a more harmonious life, both with respect to nature and to his fellow men. When man enquires into the essential nature of things, whether as a physicist probing into the deeper realms of matter, or as a mystic entering into the deeper realms of consciousness, he discovers a reality so different from the view afforded by his mechanistic perspective that he is compelled to adopt a new standpoint.

However experiences are gained, they cannot be analysed into ultimately unanalysable entities. The component parts invariably reach out to things outside themselves. To isolate an experience from its reference is to destroy its essence. In short, experience must be viewed as part of one or many webs whose parts are not definable except through their connection with the whole. This applies to the physical world as well. Thus Strapp, in concluding the "S-Matrix Interpretation of Quantum Theory", writes: "Analysis never yields an ultimate set of unanalysable basic entities or qualities. The smallest elements always reach out to other things and find their meaning and ground of meaning in these other things. Since this type of structure is suitable in the realm of mind and in the realm of matter, one is led to adopt it as the basis of an over-all worldview."<sup>62</sup>

60. Michael Polanyi, *Scientific Thought and Social Reality*, edited by Fred Schwartz, 8:4 monograph 32 (New York, 1974), pp. 136ff. Cf. Torrance, "The Place of Michael Polanyi in the Modern Philosophy of Science" (mimeograph), p. 48.

61. See Peacocke, *Science and the Christian Experience*, pp. 111-178; cf. also Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science*, pp. 355-372.

62. Henry Pierce Strapp, "S-Matrix Interpretation of Quantum Theory", *Physical Review*, D, 3:6 (Mar. 15, 1971), p. 1319.

Long before modern physicists, but closer to the time of biblical writers, Lao Tzu had already assumed such a world-view. He sees that all things are intrinsically processes in a universal flux. All things, though they have their material substance, are nevertheless in their transitory stages in the all-embracing and ever-flowing Tao.<sup>63</sup> As many commentators have repeatedly pointed out, what concerns Lao Tzu is the interrelation rather than the reduction to a fundamental substance. Hence, Needham comments, "while European philosophy tended to find reality in substance, Chinese philosophy tended to find it in relation."<sup>64</sup> Such a tendency is characteristic of Taoism.<sup>65</sup>

This relatedness of the universe, according to *TTC*, presupposes firstly the inherent unity and spontaneity of nature: that all phenomena in the world are but part of the cosmic whole, the Tao. Thus Lao Tzu writes, "Common folk see differences are clear-cut; I alone make no distinction."<sup>66</sup> Later, he says, "therefore the sage embraces the Oneness (of nature), making it his testing-instrument<sup>67</sup> for everything under heaven."<sup>68</sup> Such a unified perspective of nature enabled Chuang Tzu to assert that Tao does not only dwell in noble things, but also in such seemingly trivial things as ants and dung.<sup>69</sup> This is not only an important principle for Taoists (and for scientists) who take an equal interest in all kinds of things, but it also comes very close to what modern theologians would call the sacramental view of nature, that all things involve the power or word of God.<sup>70</sup>

Further, there is the harmonious cooperation of all beings. Not only are all objects interrelated, they also collaborate with each other. "Therefore", Lao Tzu writes, "being and non-being produce each other. Difficult and easy complete each other. Long and short contrast each other. High and low distinguish each other. Sound and voice harmonize each other. Front and behind accompany each other."<sup>71</sup> Pairs of opposite terms are construed as opposite only by the human mind, as shown in the first four lines of the same chapter. In themselves, however, they are not irreconcilable conflicts, but complements; each "contains" or "involves" one another.

As indicated before, Buddhism in general believes that differentiation between the mundane and sacred realms is but a result of faulty thinking and knowing. They are, in fact, one. Human nature, together with all the insentients, is that of the enlightened Buddha, but we have just forgotten it. Indeed, not only human nature, or plants-and-trees, but even a single particle of dust comprises Buddhahood. Chan-jan (711-782) of the T'ien-t'ai (Japanese Tendai) School, in his *Chin-kang Pi*, says that

63. *TTC*, 25.

64. Chang Tung-sun, "Ts'ung Yen-yü kou-tsaw sheng k'an chung hsi che-hsüeh ti ch'a-i" (Philosophical Difference between China and the West from the Standpoint of Language Structure) in *Tung Fang Tsa Chih* 3:1. Quoted approvingly by Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* (SCC), Cambridge, 1965, II, p. 478.

65. See Needham, *SCC* II, pp. 57, 77, 103.

66. *TTC*, chap. 20, Chan.

67. Needham modifies Waley's translation of "shih" as testing-instrument. His reason is given in *SCC* II, p. 46; cf. sect. 26, (i).

68. *TTC*, chap. 22, Waley.

69. *Chuang Tzu*, chap. 22.

70. See A.R. Peacocke, "A Sacramental View of Nature" in H. Montefiore, ed. *Nature and Man* (London, 1975), pp. 132ff. Also, "The Scope of Salvation", op. cit., pp. 39ff.

71. *TTC*, chap. 2, Chan.

"Therefore we may know that the single mind of a single particle of dust comprises the mind-nature of all sentient beings and Buddhas. . . . Therefore, when we speak of all things, why should exception be made in the case of a tiny particle of dust? Why should the substance of the *Bhūtatathatā* (Suchness or Thusness) pertain exclusively to 'us' rather than to 'other'?"<sup>72</sup>

Chan-jan further writes:

"Within the Assembly of Lotus, all are present without division. In the case of grass, trees and the soil (from which they grow), what difference is there between their four kinds of atoms. Whether they (merely) lift their feet or (energetically) traverse the (long) path, they will all reach the Precious Island (a poetic term for Nirvana). By snapping their fingers and joining their palms, they will all achieve the causation for Buddhahood."<sup>73</sup>

No doubt, in everyday life we divide the world into separate objects for various practical reasons. But this divided and categorized world is not a fundamental feature of reality, only an illusion of it. The goal of the mystics is to readjust the mind through meditation, which in Sanskrit is *samadhi* (means literally 'mental equilibrium'). It refers to the balanced and tranquil state of mind in which the wholeness of the universe is experienced. "Entering into the *samadhi* of purity, (one obtains) all penetrating insight that enables one to become conscious of the absolute oneness of the universe."<sup>74</sup> For the Buddhist, in the view of the Taoist, everything in the universe is connected to everything else, and no part of it is fundamental in the sense of being a basic constituent of a larger whole. The nature of any part is determined by the properties of all the other parts. Thus, Nagarjuna says that "things derive their being and nature by mutual dependence and are nothing in themselves."<sup>75</sup> This tenet of mysticism has become ideal for the Orientals: that opposites are to be synthesized and harmonized.

Hinduism, too, acknowledges the inherent rationality of nature that is both dynamic and holistic and cannot be manipulated by man. To categorize natural phenomena according to one's limited experience and inadequate language is, therefore, a sign of arrogance, a bondage by *karma* and *maya*. The *Gita* is very clear on this point: "all actions take place in time by the interweaving of the forces of nature, but the man lost in selfish delusion thinks that he himself is the actor."<sup>76</sup> Truly, an enlightened Hindu would not only negatively refrain from dichotomizing the world, but positively participate with his whole being in this world. So much so that the observer and the observed, subject and object, are not only inseparable, but indistinguishable.

Thus one *Upanishad* says: "When there is a duality, there one sees another; there one smells another; there one tastes another . . ."<sup>77</sup> This is a

72. Quoted in Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. and tr. by Derk Bodde (Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 385.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

74. Ashvaghosha, *The Awakening of Faith*, ed. and tr. by D.T. Suzuki (Open Court, 1900), p. 55.

75. Quoted in T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (Allen and Unwin, 1955), p. 138.

76. *BG*, 3, 27-8.

77. *BU*, 4, 5, 15.

state of consciousness where one's individuality dissolves into an undifferentiated oneness, where the world of the senses is transcended and notions of "things" are left behind—a state which a Taoist would not hesitate to describe as the cosmologicalization of the person and the personification of the cosmos.

Without knowing the cosmology of Hinduism, particularly one expounded by the *BG*, one might easily mistake it to be a mythical (used in the traditional Western sense) subjectivization of the universe. But Krishna proclaims in the *Gita* that had he not engaged in the unfailing action of maintaining the world, it surely would perish.<sup>78</sup> It is the god Shiva, the Cosmic Dancer, who sustains the manifold phenomena in the world, unifying all things by immersing them in his rhythm and making them participate in the dance. The Hindus were thus able to develop an evolutionary cosmology that was dynamic and growing. "Thus through my nature I bring forth all creation . . . I watch and in its work of creation, nature brings forth all that moves and moves not: and thus the revolutions of the world go round."<sup>79</sup> As the god is a personification of Brahman, his activity is therefore that of Brahman's myriad manifestations in the world. The dance of Shiva is the dancing universe, the ceaseless flow of energy going through an infinite variety of patterns that melt into one another.

### Conclusion

One question we must attempt to answer now: why take all these troubles to explore the Asian classical viewpoint on nature in terms of our contemporary one? Yes, the texts may be ancient, but the thoughts advocated therein are definitely modern, arguably even scientific. Among Asians they are the most cherished heritages which furnish a view of nature, as stated above, that is so much closer to the contemporary understanding of it. As such, they present a challenge to Asian theologians: the problem of nature should no longer elude our attention. The Bible asserts that incarnation, together with resurrection, is the fulfilment of God's mission to redeem and recreate the old order of things in our space and time. It will not do, therefore, if theological statements do not concern themselves with our natural concrete realm. As theologians in general, and Asian theologians in particular, whose congregations share the same concern as their fellow citizens in scientific advancement, we are obliged to clarify the area of interaction between theological and scientific inquiries. Within this stratum we must offer an account of the Christian doctrine of nature in its own cultural background, whilst leaving ourselves open to question by the understanding of natural scientists. But it does not follow from this that we should make the gospel conform to alien categories, be they scientific or cultural, for in a displaced context it could not explore the different paths that theology must pursue as the "science of God." Equally, the gospel cannot remain scientifically faithful to its subject matter if it does not include the universe which God has made and in which God has wrought our salvation; nor can its message be meaningful if it is formulated totally within an alien cultural context. It seems that the solution of the two-fold problem thus posed for the indigenization of theology may be facilitated with the help of our traditional wisdom.

78. *BG*, 8, 3.

79. *BG*, 9, 7-10.

The holistic and dynamic worldview of the East may enable us to emancipate ourselves from the narrow-minded way of thinking whereby we impose our own abstract patterns of thought upon the universe which inevitably rules out all possibility of escaping the prescriptive conditions we have laid down for what is real. Together with what we can learn from science, the mystics may enable us theologians to purify our doctrinal formulations by eliminating from them vestiges of outmoded scientific or even pre-scientific conceptions. As Whitehead writes:

Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. Its principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development. This evolution of religion is in the main a disengagement of its own proper ideas from the adventitious notions which have crept into it by reason of the expression of its own idea in terms of the imaginative picture of the world entertained in previous ages.<sup>80</sup>

One commonly held belief among Chinese fundamentalists is that both Christian principles and formulations are permanent, and that in no way should new scientific or social understandings affect their status quo. Consequently, this strand of Christians either ignores the whole corpus of scientific findings, or if they themselves are involved in a scientific profession, escape the conflict by compartmentalizing the two disciplines, thus putting into practice the old two-realms argument. It seems reasonable to believe that working within this Eastern horizon of thought, which is closer to the biblical and scientific understandings of nature than is that of the Newtonian, the indigenizing theologian should find it easier to forge a doctrine of nature which is faithful to the biblical message and meaningful to modern man.

80. A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York, 1967), p. 189.

## Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking —Asian Animism and Primal Religion

A. A. Sitompul\*

Primal religion has a complex system of beliefs. Its adherents think synthetically, and they experience life in a totality or a unity of functionally heterogeneous entities.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult for Western observers or researchers to prove, or to assume that these primal beliefs are very low in the scale of humanity, or inadequate, or incomplete, and that they began from the rudiments, or from the animism of savages up to that of civilized men.<sup>2</sup> The logical thinking of the Westerner is different from that of the Oriental. Each has its own criteria. The former has a predominantly analytical approach and the latter a synthetical and intuitive approach.

It is wrong to say that the primitive mentality is inferior of mind, or that the primitive community lacks intellect over against modern people.<sup>3</sup> The difference between primitive thought and modern thought exists because primitive people lack training and are limited in the learning process that uses an analytical approach and the system of modern science.<sup>4</sup>

We shall study some of the main categories of primal religious beliefs:

### 1. Totality and Relationship

Hendrik Kraemer<sup>5</sup> describes the totalitarian way of thinking in Asia and Africa as follows:

By totalitarian thinking is meant that in an unreflected, spontaneous way it starts from the conception of totality and of unbroken, primeval unity, which comprises and dominates the whole range of reality in nature and human life with all its distinctions, nuances and correspondences. This thoroughly synthetic and concrete way of thinking has the opposite tendency from the analysing, isolating way of modern, scientific thinking.

Philip Lumbantobing has investigated the structure of the Tobanese belief in the High God<sup>6</sup> by starting from totalitarian thinking. Only by starting from the totalitarian way of thinking are we able to understand the myths, rites, magic ceremonies, etc. of the Toba-Batak, and to approach their structure of

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1. Ph.O. Lumbantobing, *The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God* (Amsterdam, 1963), pp. 28f. Harry Parkin, *Batak Fruit of Hindu Thought* (Madras, 1978), pp. 145f.
2. Cf. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, pp. 426f.
3. L. Levy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris Felix Alcan, 1918).
4. T.S.G. Moelia, *Her primitieve denken in de moderne wetenschap* (Groningen-Den Haag-Batavia: J.B. Wolters, 1933). Moelia is against Levi-Bruhl's thesis.
5. In *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London, 1947), p. 152. Christopher L. Furtado, *The Contribution of Dr. D.T. Niles to the Church Universal and Local* (Madras, 1978), p. 198: "... Niles describes religion as 'systems of life and belief' ... every religion is a totality, and ideas in it derive their meaning from their place in their totality".
6. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 195.

belief in the High God. For them there is nothing in cosmic reality that is not an aspect of the holy totality, so that all antagonistic realities are not of an absolute, but of a relative character. Life and death, good and evil, oneness and multiplicity, day and night, etc. are not isolated independent entities, but relative contrasts or antagonistic realities, presupposing and generating each other. The totality reconciles and unites them.<sup>7</sup> Being a part of something is always to be in relation, in relative character within a larger totality. In this system of beliefs the High God is not only related to the other Three Gods (*debata na tolu*), but also to the universe, both micro- and macrocosmos.

These Three Gods are the representatives of the three functional groups in Batak society, namely *Hulahula*, *Dongan Sabutuha* and *Boru*, which respectively represent the underworld, the middleworld and the upperworld.<sup>8</sup> The interrelationship which exists in these three elements (*daliha na tolu*)<sup>9</sup> is a reflection of the cooperation of these three worlds.<sup>10</sup> It is questionable whether or not the Three Gods are symbols of the three groups of the Batak social system.<sup>11</sup>

Totalitarian thinking in the system of beliefs is not only evident in the relationship between the High God as Primal Progenitor (*Mula-Jadi na Bolon*) and the Three Gods, deities, spirits, rites or magical elements, but also within the community of social structure which is regulated by *Adat* or cosmic order, which are investigated by Philip Lumbantobing.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Transcendence and Immanence of God

W. Koedding was the first to develop the complete transcendence of the High God (*Mulajadi na Bolon*) after his comparative study with Brahmanism.<sup>13</sup> Like the Brahman the Toba-Batak have three sections of the

7. Ibid., p. 194. Rachmat Subagya, *Agama dan Alam Kerohanian Asli di Indonesia* (Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, Nusa Indah, 1979), pp. 99f. describes different types of harmonization such as "monistic dualism", "dualistic monism", "mutual symbiosis", "cosmic relationship", "cosmic feeling of oneness", "social dualism and antithetical symbol", "virtual identity" and "monodualism".

8. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 84: "The term *dongan sabutuha* (lit. womb companions) i.e. 'those who originate from one womb' points to an agnatic relationship. The term *hulahula* principally points to one's father-in-law and his nearer *dongan sabutuha* . . . *Boru* principally indicates one's son-in-law and his nearer *dongan sabutuha*". Cf. ibid., p. 149. Cf. Joh. Warneck, *Die Religion der Batak* (Leipzig, 1909), pp. 25 ff.

9. *Daliha na Tolu* (lit. the three hearth-stones) consist of *dongan sabutuha*, *hulahula* and *boru* which form the three groups in the Toba-Batak society. In Batak terminology the fourth group is sometimes called *sihalsihal* as friend. About the problem of Batak structure see Parkin, op. cit., p. 244ff. Cf. further A. Bongsu Sinaga, *The Toba-Batak High God: Transcendence and Immanence*, (Thesis, Leuven, 1975), pp. 80-82.

10. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 194.

11. Ibid., Sinaga, op. cit., p. 81.

12. The idea of harmonic order is also found in the Chinese Yin-Yang philosophy, cf. Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Manila, 1976), pp. 138, 191, 193; Douglas J. Elwood, "Emerging Themes in Asian Theological Thinking", *The Human and the Holy, Asian Perspectives in Christian Theology*, Emerito P. Nacpil Douglas J. Elwood, editors, (Quezon City, 1978), pp. 231-266, esp. pp. 246ff.

13. W. Koedding, *Die batakischen Goetter und ihre Verhaeltnis zum Brahmanismus* (AMZ 12, 1885), pp. 401-409; John. Warneck, *Die Lebenskruefte des Evangeliums*, Berlin, 1922, pp. 95ff.

world, but Mulajadi na Bolon is a personal God who lives in the highest of the heavens. He has his beginning in himself.<sup>14</sup> He had a relationship with the earth and human beings only at the beginning, but not in human history. He does not receive honor or sacrifice from the earth.

In their report Burton and Ward (1824) noted that the creator of the world or Supreme Being is *Debata si-Asi* (Merciful God). After completing the work of creation he has remained perfectly quiescent, having wholly committed the government to his tree sons.<sup>15</sup> *Debata Asi-Asi*, is either the compilation of Mulajadi na Bolon, Batara Guru and Mangala Bulan, a personal and suffering God who is nevertheless omnipresent, the representative of the Three Gods, the reflection of the High God and Three Gods, or the mediator of the High God to human need, all showing the element of transcendence in God.<sup>16</sup> The Merciful God has a less important role than Mulajadi na Bolon, being mentioned only incidentally in the prayer formulas.<sup>17</sup>

A. Bongsu Sinaga has recently investigated the function of the High God using a dualistic approach. (transcendence and immanence).<sup>18</sup> His reaction to Ph. Lumbantobing's thesis of the immanent High God has opened the way for thinking about the Bataks in the Ancient period. The total immanence of the High God is based on the theory of identification, representation and totality. For Lumbantobing the High God is not the creator of the universe in the "absolute" sense of the word but he (Mulajadi na Bolon) is the cosmos itself.<sup>19</sup> Lumbantobing's method of searching for an understanding of identifi-

14. Edwin M. Loeb, *Sumatra, Its History and People* (Wien, 1935), p. 75. Loeb's description follows: "In the Hindu account, Manu is the first man and likewise a world creator. Krishna is killed by the curse of a woman and reincarnated with Vishna, or creates a heaven for himself. Deak Pordjar, the all-knowing, reminds one of Brahman's wife, Sarasvati, the patroness of science and art . . . In Mulajadi na Bolon we find Brahma personified as Svayambhu, 'he who exists through himself'. The golden world egg, in which, or out of which, Svayambhu came as the god Brahma, and as such created the world and the gods, is converted in the Batak myth into three eggs from which the gods arise. The speculative element of Brahmanism is omitted, and the earth rather than the universe is created. The chicken is an afterthought in the Batak legend; there are eggs, and the eggs must have been laid". Ibid., pp. 77-78.

15. In Parkin, op. cit., p. 153.

16. Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

17. Joh. Warneck, *Die Religion der Batak*, pp. 25-28, esp. p. 27: "Deswegen heisst es im Gebet an ihn: 'Gott Asiasi, der da wohnt im Buschwerk, auch du erbarme dich, wenn ich dich auch nicht besonders anrufe'. Sein Verhalten gegen die Menschheit entspricht seinem Namen, er uebt Mitleid. Aber wenn er auch Mitleid uebt, so haengt er doch ab von den Groesseren. Wenn ein Mensch irgend etwas von ihm erbittet, dann antwortet er: 'So moechte ich es allerdings', das soll aber heissen: die Erfuellung haengt nicht von mir ab, sondern von den anderen Goettern". Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 82f.: ". . . According to the first version however, *Debata Asiasi* is not a separate person, but his name is the compilation of Mulajadi na Bolon, Batara Guru and Mangala Bulan. In the second version, he is described as a person, who has no particular characteristic role. 'You have no share, no relations, no house, no choice; you are like something that is swinging to and fro . . . you are too high and too low at the same time' . . . According to the third version, he forms, together with Si Raja Indapati, the fifth of the seven groups of Mulajadi na Bolon's Angels-Servants in the upperworld. His title is 'the Mediator to our Ompung Mulajadi' . . . In another version, it is said that *Debata Asiasi* remains in the middleworld to look after man while the High God and the other deities returned to the upperworld. This we understand as an indication to the idea that *Debata Asiasi* represents the care of God for man". Cf. Parkin, op. cit., p. 194 n. 62.

18. Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 14ff, 136-137, 202-206, 263-265.

19. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 195.



cation is similar to representation. The representative is identified with the represented. The dividing line between the representative and the one represented is so vague that representation is the same as identity.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Lumbantobing's idea of equating the High God as a personal God with the cosmos,<sup>21</sup> the cosmic Tree,<sup>22</sup> or cosmic space and time<sup>23</sup> is difficult to realize in daily life. Even though all things are able to become personal, animate creatures, the Ancient people are able to distinguish the High God as creator (Mulajadi na Bolon) from the creature.<sup>24</sup> He transcends time, and he himself is eternal, and immortality and omnipotence are attributed to him.<sup>25</sup>

Sinaga has not only examined the idea of transcendence and immanence among the High God and the deities (theogony), but also with the world (cosmogony), the Tree of Creation, human beings (anthropogony), ceremony and sacramentality. Where Lumbantobing uses the representative, Sinaga uses the symbol.<sup>26</sup> Sinaga considers that the transcendence of God saturates a particular object and thus he manifests himself to man, namely, through a symbol in a kind of spontaneous theophany and provoked theophany.<sup>27</sup> Through the immanence of God he is present in the world, particularly in a symbol. He describes this as follows:

While being present in a symbol, however, God remains at a distance, he transcends it because he is the Infinite and has his own being and life in himself distinct from the cosmos.<sup>28</sup>

The idea of the High God is not only found in Indonesia, but also in Primal Religions in Australia, Africa, India, etc.<sup>29</sup>

Henry H. Presler has investigated the structure of beliefs in the High God as Supreme Being in India,<sup>30</sup> for example, among the Andamans, Oraons, Maler and the Nagas. Sarat Chandra Roy also observed that the specific character of the High God of the Oraons is a transcendence of God contained in their belief in Dharmes as a "Supreme God, the source of light and life, a Supreme Deity ruling over the universe and over other gods and

20. Ibid., p. 29.

21. Ibid., p. 195.

22. Ibid., p. 71.

23. Ibid., pp. 135f.

24. Joh. Warneck, *Die Lebenskräfte des Evangeliums* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 12, 27. Koedding, op. cit., p. 406; Loeb, op. cit., pp. 75f; W.M. Hocagaloeng, *Poestaha taringot toe Tarombo ni Bangso Batak* (Lagoeboti, 1926), p. 6. Mircea Eliade, *From Primitives to Zen, A Thematic Sourcebook of the History of Religions* (London, 1967), pp. 5ff. indicates "Like many celestial Supreme Beings of 'primitive' peoples, the High Gods of a great number of African ethnic groups are regarded as creators, all-powerful, benevolent, and so forth; but they play a rather insignificant part in the religious life. Being either too distant or too good to need a real cult, they are invoked only in cases of great crisis".

25. Loeb, op. cit., pp. 75f; Sinaga op. cit., pp. 28-30.

26. Ibid., p. 20.

27. Ibid., p. 21.

28. Ibid., p. 22.

29. E.O. James, *The Beginnings of Religion* (London), pp. 16, 18, 73. W. Schmidt, *Ursprung der Gottesidee* (Münster, 1926-35). E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London, 1964), pp. 287ff.

30. Henry H. Presler, *Primitive Religions in India* (Bangalore, 1971), p. 55-58.

spirits, the Creator. The Supreme God alone is meant, and not the sun at all."<sup>31</sup>

As we see in the theory of the immanence of the High God, which Sinaga shows through the active participation and cooperation of the human being with God in the ceremony or sacrifice,<sup>32</sup> so also here—in India—God is not otiose, but he is present in and knows the universe:

He sees all that men and spirits do, and knows all that they think. He punishes offences against the rules, but may be pacified by a sacrifice. The ceremony of Danda-Katta (breaking of the tooth) is performed for Him only, during which the myth of the origin of the race is recited. At this ceremony the village elders preside, whereas the village priest superintends other ceremonies . . .<sup>33</sup>

### 3. Vital Life

Primal Religion believes that all beings in the universe have a life, a personal life which we call *anima* in relation to the soul (*tondi*). Edward B. Tylor described animism as the general belief in spiritual beings, and the term "spirits" is applied not only to gods and divinities, but also to souls of the living and the dead.<sup>34</sup> It refers to human beings and animals, but plants, stones, water, etc. also have souls.<sup>35</sup> R.R. Marrett defined a belief which is held to be sacred—in *mana*—as animatism.<sup>36</sup> He was aware of the phenomena of life, growth and movement as manifested in the animation of nature.

The people in Primal Religion did not see the isolation of what modern man calls the spiritual from the physical life. They did not live in a dualistic concept, but saw life in harmony. This is quite different from the dualistic way of thinking which sees a dichotomy between body and soul, personal and impersonal life, or between the living and the dead.<sup>37</sup>

The *tondi* of the Batak is most commonly translated as "the soul of a living human being", "soul power", or "the life in the body".<sup>38</sup> Not only human beings are regarded as having *tondi*, but also all things of value, like cattle,

31. Ibid., p. 57.

32. Sinaga, op. cit., p. 284f.

33. Presler, op. cit., p. 57.

34. Tylor, op. cit., p. 426 says that "The theory of Animism divides into two great dogmas, forming part of one consistent doctrine; first, concerning souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities . . . Thus Animism, in its full development, includes the belief in souls and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinate spirits, these doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship". pp. 448f, 457: "... Departing the body at the time of death, the soul or spirit is considered set free to linger near the tomb, to wander on earth or flit in the air, to travel to the proper region of spirits—the world beyond the grave".

35. Tylor, op. cit., pp. 469, 474. Cf. Durkheim, op. cit., pp. 240-272.

36. R.R. Marrett, *The Threshold of Religion* (London, 1914), p. 31.

37. Cf. Furtado, op. cit., pp. 122ff, 139, 172.

38. Warneck, *Die Religion der Batak*, p. 46 indicates "Der tondi (Seele, Seelenstoff, Stoffseele, Lebensmaterie) des Menschen ist ähnlich seinem irdischen Körper, seine Gestalt ähnlich der leiblichen Gestalt, seine Grösse wie die des Leibes". J. Winkler, *Die Toba-Batak auf Sumatra in gesunden und kranken Tagen* (Stuttgart, 1925), p. 2ff. J.C. Vergouwen, *The Social Organisation and Customary Law of the Toba-Batak of Northern Sumatra* (The Hague, 1964), p. 80 ff. Parkin, op. cit., p. 145.

houses, boats, plants, and especially rice.<sup>39</sup> A *tondi* is dynamic, not static. It is movable and transformable, not limited by time and space. It is a mobile power which moves through the air and has no settled dwelling place. The *tondi* has supernatural powers and can, for example, be liberated from the body by a dream or by a particular experience of fright. The absence of the *tondi* from the body leaves the person concerned in a crisis, no longer in harmony. In such a crisis situation the people, more particularly the relatives of the person who has been frightened or who is suffering illness,<sup>40</sup> must design a special ceremony to restore the life of the person concerned. In Batak society the rite of the *mangalap tondi* or *manghirap tondi* (recalling a wandering soul from the desolate place), and *mangupa tondi* (strengthening of the soul) is still popular today.<sup>41</sup>

Harry Parkin's recent exposition of the Batak *tondi* cult summarizes that:

Life for the Toba-Batak is encounter with power, and it is in and through the 'tondi' that power is experienced. Tondi is the life principle both of the individual and of the society . . .<sup>42</sup>

The concept of life is clearly not only in relation to human beings (anthropogony), but also in relation to the universe or the world (cosmogony).

The Cosmic Tree plays a great role as the Tree of Life and as the navel of the universe in ancient Batak society as well as in ancient Mesopotamia, Siberia and India.<sup>43</sup> M. Eliade has found that:

the Cosmic Tree symbolizes the mystery of a world in perpetual regeneration that it can symbolize, at the same time or successively, the pillar of the world and the cradle of the human race, the cosmic renovation and the lunar rhythms, the Center of the World and the path by which one can pass from the Earth to Heaven, etc.<sup>44</sup>

The Batak Cosmic Tree which grows slantingly into the upperworld, (*Hariara Sundung di Langit*, symbolizes the slaughtering pole, and this symbol is con-

39. Winkler, op. cit., p. 2; Parkin, *ibid.*

40. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 99; Parkin *ibid.*

41. Vergouwen, op. cit., pp. 81ff. indicates the *tondi* personified such as *mangari-ari tondi* (= recalling the *tondi* to reassure it), *mangalap tondi* (= bringing back the *tondi*) which is also called *manghirap tondi* (= to recall a wandering *tondi*), *padiruma tondi* (= binding the *tondi* to its dwelling) and *mangupa tondi* (= the enrichment, strengthening and binding of the *tondi* by magico-religious means). The *mangalap tondi* rite to recall a wandering *tondi* consists of six elements: (a) the drums are beaten, (b) offerings are made to the deities and to the spirits, (c) the "missing" *tondi* is respectfully requested to return from the desolate place, (d) rice is sprinkled on the head of the deprived person, (e) a feast is held, and (f) the *ulos* (= a kind of garment) gift is transferred by the *hulahula*, cf. Parkin, op. cit., pp. 145f.

42. Parkin, op. cit., p. 151. In addition to the given text: "Toba-Batak social structure, especially in the 'hulahula'-'sahala' relationship, is based on the outworkings of 'tondi'-power. Ethical and moral values in Toba-Batak society are rooted in the conviction that the good of the 'tondi' is the Supreme Good. Toba-Batak hope is concentrated on the anthropic concept of 'sombaon', i.e. deification of the 'tondi'."

43. M. Eliade "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism." *The History of Religions* edited by M. Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago, 1962), pp. 86-107, esp. pp. 104-106. Parkin, op. cit., p. 235. Cf. W.O.E. Oesterley and Th. H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development* (London, 1935), pp. 22-28.

44. Eliade, op. cit., p. 94.

ceived as uniting the underworld, the middleworld and the upperworld.<sup>45</sup> According to Sinaga the Tree of Creation relates to the creative, providential and judicial power of the High God in its specific application to the creation.<sup>46</sup> The Tree, as the symbol of the High God, renews, gives rebirth, grows, restores or gives new life in creation, at a given time or place. The idea of the linear in time (with its element of the dividing-line) is not found among the ancient Bataks. The idea of a circular course or of an eternally returning cycle based on the seasons, is a sign of unity and totality in the universe. Out of the old year a new one will arise, from the fallen fruit a new tree with the same trunk will spring up.<sup>47</sup> The fate of all human beings is recorded on the Tree. On each leaf of this Tree the High God has written a word, such as fruitfulness, wealth, etc.<sup>48</sup>

So we see the existence and interrelationship of life in the visible and in the invisible. As life dominates the middleworld, so life also dominates the upperworld. As the earth is dominated by and controlled by life, so also throughout the universe. The universe is more than contiguous, it is continuous. So the future also belongs to Life.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Predestination and Freedom

The idea of the fatalistic is universal but in different forms or types.<sup>50</sup> This terminology is well known as predestination or the will of God among Christians. The meaning of fate among the Toba-Batak is *sibaran*, *suhat-suhat* or *bagian*.<sup>51</sup> Before the pre-existent tondi (soul) enters the womb it has freedom to choose its will in the life to come, namely in the middleworld. Its choice is based on the High God's approval of its request. The tondi determines the way of living and the fate of the human being. After the tondi has chosen its fate it is recorded on a leaf of the Tree of Fate or the Tree of Life.

The relationship of God's providential power with man's free will is described as follows:

Before the tondi enters the womb, the High God will ask him what fate he desires. And what he wishes the High God will grant him. The tondi

45. P. Voorhoeve, *Batakse Buffelwichelarij, Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 114, (1958), p. 242. Sinaga, op. cit., p. 50. The location of the Tree is questionable either in the middleworld (Warneck, *Die Religion der Batak*, p. 28), or upperworld (Lumbantobing, *The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God*, pp. 42, 74), or a root is in the upperworld (C.M. Pleyte, *Bataksche Vertellingen*, Utrecht, 1894, p. 15). Cf. W. Stoehr, "Die Religionen der Altvoelker Indonesiens und der Philippinen", *Die Religionen Indonesiens* (Stuttgart-Berlin-Koeln-Mainz, 1965), pp. 48ff, 59, 72ff, 177 refers the creation myth of the cosmic Tree to the middleworld.

46. Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 54-67. The differences among the three symbols of the Cosmic Tree are not clear in Sinaga's description.

47. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 133.

48. Loeb, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

49. Presler, op. cit., pp. 302f.

50. Helmer Ringgren (ed.), *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore, and Literature* (Stockholm, 1967).

51. Sinaga, op. cit., p. 62. *Sibaran* or *suhat-suhat* means measure, *bagian* means share or portion. Parkin, op. cit., p. 242; Winkler, op. cit., p. 78; Andar Lumbantobing, *Das Amt in der Batak-Kirche* (Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft), p. 12. A popular Batak parable runs as follows: "Tu ginjang ninna porda, to toru pambararan; Tu ginjang ninna roha, patutorubon do sibaran"—An axestick strives upwards, pieces of hewn food strive downwards; A human will strives upwards, it is under a fate.

of a man is with the High God. Before a man sees the light of day, he (= the tondi) has already asked (his fate) from the High God. If he has asked for what is good, he will get it. The tondi of living men, of the deceased and of those who are still to be born are with the High God. The High God is in all men and beings that have breath. The tondi determines the way of living and the fate of man. Before the conception in the womb he will ask his fate from Mula Djadi. If he wishes to become a prince, it is bound to happen; likewise he will become a thief, should he so desire.<sup>52</sup>

The idea of the fatalistic in this case has several traditions.<sup>53</sup>

The Tree of Fate or Hariara Jambu Barus is probably represented by the Hindu Lokapalas.<sup>54</sup> A particular oracle in terms of *tondung sahala* (power oracle) is conducted by the witchdoctor (*datu*) to describe the fate.<sup>55</sup> But the idea of fate in its extreme was not accepted by the ancient Bataks. From the story of the Half Man (Si Aji Sambola) we see that the fate could have been changed because of the request of the soul for the Mercy of God, but he must be sure that justice is also done to the creature. It is possible for the fate to change.<sup>56</sup> Arsenius Lumbantobing in his version writes as follows:

God said: 'Now then. You have seen and you are convinced that there is really (human) fate and I am just in my works; I do not favour anybody. You ask only for my mercy. I am merciful to you; I shall create you as a full man, because you have ceaselessly prayed for mercy, your fate does not count anymore'. God cut his body into bits, he roasted it in a metal cooking pot, and he created an integral and handsome man.<sup>57</sup>

From the aforementioned version we see clearly that God as Creator takes man into a participation in God's Life and Being,<sup>58</sup> where man asks God's Mercy and Freedom on the one side, but also has responsibility to use his free will to choose his existence for life in the world, on the other side. The idea of good fortune or bad luck is dependent on God's giving free will to human beings. His desire is that human beings should be responsible creatures, not passive creatures or automatons. Man's suffering, misfortune, ill luck, disaster, early death, no children, etc. all happen because of having made a wrong choice from the beginning. In this case they need salvation or liberation through performing a special ceremony to nourish and strengthen the soul (*mangupa tondi*) as much as possible.<sup>59</sup> The palm of the hand in the Filipino concept of *palad* is probably connected with the belief that the fate of one's future is written on one's own palm.<sup>60</sup> L.N. Mercado is correct when he

52. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 98.

53. Parkin, op. cit., p. 242 considers as follows: (1) the tondi makes a specific request to Mula adi na Bolon, (2) the tondi picks a leaf from the *hariara jambu barus*, (3) the guardians of the tree make the actual choice for the tondi or (4) the choice is determined by the fall of a particular leaf when the tondi approaches the tree. Cf. Loeb, op. cit., p. 79.

54. Parkin, *ibid.*, pp. 243, 249.

55. Sinaga, op. cit., p. 61; Winkler, op. cit., pp. 72-202, esp. pp. 62, 185.

56. P. Voorhoeve, *Overzicht van de Volksverhalen der Batak* (Thesis, Leiden, 1927), pp. 129ff.

57. Arsenius Loembantobing, *Pingikiran ni Halak Batak Sipelebegoe iaringot toe Tondi ni Djolma doeng Mate* (Leiden, 1920), p. 22; Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 62-65.

58. Sinaga, *ibid.*

59. Winkler, op. cit., pp. 124ff; Vergouwen, op. cit., pp. 84-87. Cf. Sinaga, op. cit., p. 133.

60. Mercado, op. cit., pp. 67ff.

says that *palad* has a negative and a positive side. Negatively it leads to resignation since fate is seemingly all-powerful. Therefore no amount of human effort can thwart it. Positively, *palad* includes human cooperation, the aspect of taking a risk and having hope.<sup>61</sup> Both man and God must cooperate, as in the following proverb from the Philippines:

Man does the action but God is responsible.  
(= *Tao ang gumagawa, Diyos ang namamahala*).<sup>62</sup>

## 5. Liberation for New Creation

Adat or Cosmic Order has been created by the High God from the beginning of the universe. He does not like chaos, he governs the upperworld and the underworld too.<sup>63</sup> Adat is not only a religious beginning, but continues as a religion to decide everything in life and death.<sup>64</sup> All things or attitudes of human beings in society or in relation to nature are determined by God as the owner of the cosmic order. But Adat gives freedom to man to be for or against the cosmic order in the world. If he is for the cosmic order it means he is in harmony with the universe. God blesses him and his family during his life, but also his descendants after his death.

Among the ancient Bataks, and still today, the living descendants can influence their departed ancestors, particularly through the *sombaon*,<sup>65</sup> or by building the high, beautiful and expensive monuments (*tugu*) or tombs.<sup>66</sup> Referring to the encounter of the Christian faith and Adat in ancestor veneration and funeral rites Lothar Schreiner notes:

The Christians venerate their dead relatives in diverse manners. In North Sumatra they unearth the corpse after an adequate time and re-bury it in a permanent, often ornamented, grave or sarcophagus. The ceremonial reburial of the bones is the occasion for a family or a clan feast. There are Christian rules for these ceremonies, but there are also evident pre-Christian adat customs . . . There is a strong tendency to erect statues for outstanding ancestors, for those who have a genealogical key position . . .<sup>67</sup>

By granting their requests for blessing, fruitfulness, wealth or dignity in the middleworld, departed ancestors will bless their descendants, so some people believe within the context of a Primal Religion. Ancestor worship is still

61. Ibid., p. 72.

62. Ibid.

63. Pleyte, op. cit., p. 17; Sinaga, op. cit., p. 107.

64. Lothar Schreiner, *Adat und Evangelium, Zur Bedeutung der altvoelkischen Lebensordnungen fuer Kirche und Mission unter den Batak in Nordsumatra* (Guetersloh, 1972), pp. 183f.

65. Winkler, op. cit., pp. 7, 58, 129, 131-150. Warneck, *Die Lebenskraefte des Evangeliums*, p. 56 explains the immortality of the soul, "Unsterblichkeit der Seele". Harley Harris Bartlett, *The Labors of the Datoe: Part I—An annotated list of Religious, Magical and Medical Practices of the Batak of Asahan, Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1930), pp. 1-73, esp. pp. 28ff. Vergouwen, op. cit., pp. 71f.

66. Schreiner, op. cit., pp. 231-256. Cf. Oesterley-Robinson, op. cit., pp. 58-61. Paul B. Pedersen, *Batak Blood and Protestant Soul. The Development of National Batak Churches in North Sumatra* (Michigan, 1970), pp. 86f. Cf. W.T. Harris and E.G. Parrinder, *The Christian Approach to the Animist* (London, 1960), pp. 25-36 about God and the Ancestors.

67. Schreiner, op. cit., pp. 292f.

alive, even though rejected by the church in all forms.

In Article 16 of the HKBP Confession on Remembrance of the Dead, we find some sentences that "oppose and reject the teaching of animism which states that the souls of the dead have a relationship with the living, as well as the doctrine which teaches that the souls of the deceased remain in the grave".<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the people do not formally recognize ancestor worship, but informally by visiting the ancestor's grave or by collecting things which the ancestor liked during his life, as for example, his favourite food at a feast.

If the people oppose the cosmic order nature will be in disorder, which means sickness, misfortune, suffering, unfruitfulness, poverty, etc. will occur because of their sin in the community or in the universe. Moral conscience or behaviour is very important to sustain the correct order. Courteousness is life, impudence is ruin.<sup>69</sup>

Originally the concept of sin had many meanings, forms and terminologies for the ancient Bataks. *Sala* means wrongs, faults, offences.<sup>70</sup> This terminology is popular and acceptable instead of *dosa* (sin). The terminology for "forgiveness of sins" is unique among the Christians, and it is used in church ceremony, especially in the confession of sins in the liturgy.<sup>71</sup> The idea of punishment is related to a magico-religious character or to supernatural means.<sup>72</sup> Vergouwen correctly describes it as follows:

An offence frequently produces an unfavourable effect on the person concerned and on his surroundings or, if more than one person is affected by the offence, on the village or the region where the offence was committed. This harmful effect is of a magico-religious character. The offence has brought about a disturbance of the harmony that must necessarily be present in a person, and in a territory if desired prosperity is to be achieved. This balance can be upset by 'black magic' being used against a person, a village, or a region, *mandabu sipuspus*.<sup>73</sup>

The actual punishment of the offence is not on the person concerned, but his inherent soul will be corrected, "then the tondi of the person concerned must be strengthened and the supernatural balance must be restored . . ."<sup>74</sup> The person who is to be punished must be granted the possibility of being able again to participate in the life of the community. Restoration of the supernatural balance is not only realized in terms of punishment (as divine punishment!). In the law of offences under the judge restoration is also possible through a confession of guilt,<sup>75</sup> offering a meal such as meat and rice,<sup>76</sup> or eating a mixed meal (*mangan indahan sinaor*) as an acknowledgement of mutual

68. "Confession of Faith of the H.K.B.P." in Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *Asian Voices in Christian Theology* (New York, 1976), p. 225.

69. "Pantun hangoluun, tois hamagoan" is a popular Batak proverb. Sinaga, op. cit., p. 229 refers to the High God imparting his life esp. in the New Year Celebration.

70. Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 350.

71. Adelbert A. Sitompul, "The Sacraments in the Augsburg Confession and the HKBP Confession", *Lutheran Theological Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (May 1982), pp. 26-36, esp. p. 33.

72. Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 353.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.; J. Roest, *Het Schuldvraagstuk in het Adatstrafrecht van den Indischen Archipel* (Leiden, 1941), p. 376.

75. Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 350.

76. Ibid., p. 356.

guilt and as a sign of a reconciliation,<sup>77</sup> purification<sup>78</sup> or propitiation ceremony.<sup>79</sup> After performing the aforementioned elements, a new cosmic order or All-order in the community will be established, a blessing and benediction will strengthen a person's tondi.

In ancient Primal Religions the curse is considered to be a form of immanent justice against invisible sin.<sup>80</sup> The Bataks see that the High God is not only the creator or transcendent God but also the immanent God. In juridical functions today people still experience their daily life as controlled by him, which the old parable indicates as follows:

where the sirungguk sways there will always be the wild banana;  
where we are seated, ompunta Debata (= God Grandfather) is also present.<sup>81</sup>

This parable not only shows respect for the court or acceptance of a judge as a representative of a higher authority,<sup>82</sup> but also intends to avoid lies and to encourage members of the community to confess a right or good thing. The interpersonal collective must always be in harmony with the community in looking for the goodness of God in the cosmic order. The infinite goodness of God is committed not only to the eternal conservation of values, but is also applied to persons. Value is personality at its best, because the existence of values depends on the existence of persons. God, the conserver of values, must be God, the conserver of persons.<sup>83</sup>

The idea of curse or self-curse such as *sapata* among the ancient Bataks<sup>84</sup> is quite similar to the doctrine of *gaba* in the Filipino philosophy of retribution<sup>85</sup> and of *karma* in Hinduism and Buddhism.<sup>86</sup> Karma is "a cosmic law of debit and credit for good and evil, a law of moral retribution, eternally recurring. Karma does not create, it only adjusts the effects of action".<sup>87</sup> It relates to the individual, community and world environment.

The faults, offences or sins of the whole people or of the individual in a given community which have accumulated throughout the whole year and which cause various disasters should be purified by a special ceremony,

77. Ibid., p. 357; Roest, op. cit., pp. 255-270; Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 217-219.

78. Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 356; Roest, ibid.; Bartlett, op. cit., p. 37; Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 150-156, 242-254.

79. Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 357; Roest, ibid.

80. Mercado, op. cit., p. 184, which looks from the idea of retribution.

81. Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 386. Article 1 of the HKBP Confession concerning God has rejected the term "Ompunta Debata": "By means of this doctrine we reject and oppose the custom of calling God 'Grandfather' . . ." H. Rosin, *The Lord is God* (Amsterdam, 1956), has a different meaning and function of Ompunta Debata, cf. pp. 199-211.

82. Against Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 386.

83. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (London—New York—Melbourne—Sydney), p. 221.

84. Vergouwen, op. cit., pp. 84, 86, 95, 227. Winkler, op. cit., pp. 36, 56, 81, 146f.

85. Mercado, op. cit., p. 185.

86. George Benjamin Walker, *The Hindu World, An Encyclopedic Survey of Buddhism*, Vol. I (New York, p. 529); Mercado, ibid.

87. Mercado, ibid.



namely the New Year's sacrificial ceremony.<sup>88</sup> In this ceremony the offering is a slaughtering-pole or a buffalo.<sup>89</sup> In the ceremony the focus is on the battle against Naga Padoha.<sup>90</sup> After the buffalo has been tied to the slaughtering-pole, drums are beaten, people dance around the pole, prayers are announced to give a sacrifice to God (and to the Deity) and to ask for the forgiveness of the social community and its world (in that place and time!), and then the ritual battle begins.<sup>91</sup> The suffering of the victim, or his death, is related to the battle against Naga Padoha, the Prince of the underworld. The destructive power of Naga Padoha shows itself through an earthquake, smallpox, epidemics and disasters to the people in the middleworld.<sup>92</sup>

The ceremonies of the New Year celebration are regarded as the libera-

88. Lumbantobing, *The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God*, pp. 167-169; Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 172 ff; Vergouwen, op. cit., p. 76 explains that "the main motives for holding the sacrificial ceremonies were great drought and the fear of a bad harvest to follow, epidemics, particularly smallpox, and cholera, and the annual agricultural-offering, the mangase". Presler, op. cit., p. 99 describes Rites of Intensification after Rites of Passage in India as follows: "A second class of rites expresses the religious responses of groups to the rhythmic changes of Nature. Such rites follow the regularities apparent in connection with the sun, the moon, the seasons of the year, the periodic surge of game (for hunters) and of fish (for anglers), the blossoming and ripening of fruit trees, the fluctuations of simple agriculture, the onset of the rainy season, and so on. The customary changes in vegetation and in the number and habits of animals, become ritualised in primitive religion . . . Such rites also aim to readjust human beings to the changes".
89. Sinaga, op. cit., pp. 172-179; W.K.H. Ypes, *Bijdrage tot de kennis van de stamverwantschap, de inheemsche rechtsgemeenschappen en het grondenrecht der Toba-en Dairihataks* (Leiden: Adatrechtstichting, 1932), pp. 160ff; V.E. Korn, *Batakse Offerande, Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 109, (S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), I, pp. 32-51; II, pp. 97-127. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 168.
90. Sinaga, *ibid.*, p. 172 has pointed out that the whole New Year's Celebration culminates and reaches its high point in the ceremony of slaughtering the buffalo; Loeb, op. cit., p. 77 indicates Naga Padoha as the principal Batak evil divinity. This god is not only the god of the underworld and of the sea, but also of vegetation, cf. Lumbantobing, op. cit., p. 93. This serpent (= Naga Padoha) bears the middleworld on his head and lives in the sea and then, when turning over on his side, he causes earthquakes, whirlwinds, roaring thunder and heavy rains, Lumbantobing, *ibid.*, p. 46 (Myth A. III). Lumbantobing, *ibid.*, p. 71 (Myth C.V.) tells that the High God changed Naga Padoha into Pane na Bolon. Cf. further Joh. Warneck, *Die Religion der Batak*, pp. 30ff.
91. Sinaga, *ibid.*, p. 186; Warneck, op. cit., pp. 107f.; Korn, op. cit., p. 107. Presler has pointed out the main types of tribal dances in India such as mimetic-dances, pantomime-dances and gymnastic-dances. Magic and religion are worked into each type in varying degrees. "Pantomimes include a dance depicting the famous battle between the Bhutanese and the Lepchas, and one illustrating the myth explaining why the Rungit river flows over the Teesta river at Peshoke. Gymnastic dances include the War Dance requiring physical power and stamina in jumping, body throwing, bending in order to show being wounded, falling, dying, and ultimate victory", *ibid.*, pp. 113f.
92. Joh. Warneck, *Die Lebenskraefte des Evangeliums*, p. 74; Stoehr, op. cit., p. 53; Sinaga, op. cit., p. 188. He describes purification ceremonies as a battle against personified evil in order to liberate the middleworld from the hegemony of the destructive force. "Since the New Year Celebration is the actualization of the regeneration of time and creation, it is necessary for the whole of creation to be purified from chaotic elements, from stains and from sin . . . the expulsion of evil spirits from creation, the purification of the mind and wishes, the cleansing of the village, the putting on of sacred garments and the holy water", *ibid.*, p. 150. Cf. Presler, op. cit., p. 130: "The syntengs of the Jaintia hills in Assam reverence smallpox as a goddess, and consider it an honour to be smitten by the disease. They call the pock marks, the kiss of the goddess. The deeper the scar the greater the honour. Women wash their hair in water used by a diseased person, and bring their children to the hut of the sick hoping to let them receive the kiss of the goddess". Cf. Winkler, op. cit., p. 21 about the cholera plague.

tion of human beings from the demonic or evil power which is responsible for disasters, poverty, unfruitfulness of human beings, animals and vegetation, serious sickness and chaotic cosmic order. At the same time it restores cosmic harmony or actualizes the new creation. In the symbolic battle<sup>93</sup> the immanence of God struggles against the Naga Padoha, and at last<sup>94</sup> the victory of the High God is proclaimed. Then the evil spirits are eliminated from the middleworld, the people are happy and joyful. The buffalo is flayed and cut up. The vital parts of the animal, namely the heart and kidneys are cooked and set aside as an offering. The rest of the meat is distributed among the people in pieces from a common portion (*jambar hatopan*). All the people have a rightful claim to be partakers or participants in this battle.<sup>95</sup>

93. Sinaga, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-206, esp. pp. 204f. Cf. Presler, *op. cit.*, pp. 103ff about rites as symbolic action in India.

94. Presler, *Ibid.*, p. 108 indicates rite as means to ends. "The basic assumption underlying religious rites in Mid-India, at least, is that they are means to ends . . . Rites accomplish something by supernatural Power".

95. Sinaga, *op. cit.*, p. 201 gives an illustration of what happens after the New Year Celebration, for example, "People visit one another, marriages are organized. From the harvest people can spend more money for their pleasure and important purchases. Business contracts are made and people forget the intense days of the New Year Celebration. In short, the people live in a purer, more sacred and stronger world which brings them happiness and joy. It is the optimism of the re-created paradise."

# Nature and the Natural in Luther's Thought

Yoshikazu Tokuzen\*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The theological term "nature" is a very complicated one, as one can see from the article "*Natur und Christentum*" etc. in RGG or other similar articles in encyclopedias. But dealing with our theme "Luther's Thought on Nature and the Natural in Asian Contexts", I believe it is appropriate to follow the preliminary theological understanding of nature in RGG (3rd. ed., Vol. IV, 1326), that nature is creation in its present condition and is the phenomenal living world. In this presentation I will try to show how Luther understands nature in this sense. The reason why I set up this sort of limit is simply because we are in Asia, where people are living in and with nature differently than in other parts of the world, especially the western world.

It seems to me that Beethoven took a walk every morning, getting inspirations from nature, that trees were saying to him 'everything is holy, holy and holy!' Trees, streams, grasses, birds and everything in nature has a secret and is mysterious, noble and holy.

This quotation is taken from a radio interview with a Japanese orchestra conductor. This reflects a typical Japanese, and probably Asian, way of understanding and interpreting nature as holy, nature as having to do with deity. In this typical situation and into this thought world we are to speak our Christian belief and understanding. What do we Asian Christians think about nature? How can we have a confrontation and/or dialog with the general Asian understanding of nature? Can we, as Christians in Asia, give certain contributions to world theology in this regard? With these questions in mind we are dealing with the general theme of this Symposium and I am to give my presentation.

## II. "NATURE AS A GOD" OR "GOD OF AND ABOVE NATURE"

"To the hills I lift up my eyes.  
From whence does help come?  
From God of heaven and earth help comes to me."

This is one of my favorite hymns written by a Japanese Christian called Umenosuke Bessho. Clearly it is based on Psalm 121. But if we carefully examine the mentality behind this, or between the lines, it is not quite clear whether the poet is singing about God of the very high or God just on or in the hills. Anyway he is speaking about God, not so severely cut off or separated from surrounding nature, while the Psalmist sings about and praises God on High, lifting his eyes higher and higher than the tops of the hills. With this it is clear that the hills, upon which the poet is now looking, stand against him and he is looking for help, which he asserts and confesses comes from God.

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When Luther made comments on this Psalm, he really did follow the steps of the Psalmist, saying that "the Psalm contains the teaching of the faith. But the faith is the recognition of things, which we cannot see but must only hope. The faith sticks to the promise and the Word of God, which is totally above all human understanding." (The quotations here and hereafter in this part are made from Luther's "In XV Psalmos graduum". 1532/33 [1540], WA 40-III, 46ff.). His translation of the Psalm is a little different from ours, namely, "I lift up my eyes to the hills, from which help comes to me. My help comes to me from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." He begins his comments in this way:

What he speaks about the hills of help, contains a sort of contradiction in itself, as every teaching of the faith and every promise brings contradiction with itself, if one looks at the flesh. The promise is given to the believers, that the Lord be with them, but if one looks at the outward side, Christ seems to be cast on the cross.

Here we find that his theology of the cross becomes the hermeneutic principle. "When temptations come, one comes here and another goes there and many kinds of consolations and helps are to be sought." And finally, "I speak on the hills, which the bodily eyes cannot see. Because who could either see so clearly or be so wise, that he could see with eyes, that the Hill Moria is the holy hill. The eyes see only some amount of earth; they do not see the holiness, which is laid on it, because the Word of God is there."

Especially clear becomes his exposition, when he comes to the point: "That he (the Psalmist) speaks not simply 'from the Lord' but adds a clause: 'who made heaven and earth', shows the contradiction, in order to refuse all other guard, which the human being looks for." "These and similar helps, which the world seeks, are for David just against God," the Creator. "This God is, says David, my almighty and sure help, on which I have no doubt, that he would deceive me even a moment. I pray to this Lord for help, who can give not only health for some years, but a life with assured conscience and after this life the eternal life."

With this it is asserted that God is totally different from nature but has something to do with nature to the extent that he is the Creator from whom help comes to man without pause.

### III. GOD NOT PRESENT AND AT THE SAME TIME PRESENT IN EVERYTHING

I had a chance to listen to the sermon of Prof. Bohren when he visited Japan several years ago. In his sermon he mentioned that "God is present even in potatoes." At first this expression was almost shocking to me, because most Japanese pastors avoid this type of expression, being very cautious about any misunderstanding, that such theology would be considered pantheistic. What can we hear from Luther in this respect?

In the treatise "Daß diese Worte Christi (Das ist mein Leib, etc.) noch fest stehen wider die Schwarmgeister," 1527. Luther tries to explain the omnipresence of God in this way (WA 23, 133f.): "The right hand of God is the almighty power of God, which at one and the same time can be nowhere and yet must be everywhere." In describing God's power in this way Luther speaks very paradoxically. And only in this way can one describe God's relation to nature and vice versa.

It cannot be at any one place, I say. For if it were at some specific place, it would have to be there in a circumscribed and determinate manner, as everything which is at one place must be at that place determinately and measurably, so that it cannot meanwhile be at any other place. But the power of God cannot be so determined and measured, for it is uncircumscribed and immeasurable, beyond and above all that is or may be.

In this sense God is totally transcendent, God is totally other than everything. But at the same time Luther can say in the following way:

On the other hand, it must be essentially present at all places, even in the tiniest tree leaf. The reason is this: It is God who creates, effects and preserves all things through his almighty power and right hand, as our Creed confesses. For he dispatches no officials or angels when he creates or preserves something, but all this is the work of his divine power itself. If he is to create or preserve it, however, he must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects.

So God is transcendent and at the same time immanent. God who works and acts is present everywhere and in everything. "Indeed, he must be present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being, on all sides, through and through, below and above, before and behind, so that nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power." God is present in everything, not in a static way but in a dynamic way. God in his work is free and present in his creation, in nature as Word and Spirit. That means that his presence in a creature is not a substantial one but that he is present in a creature as creating will and therefore confronts nature. In this way God is far away from and at the same time very near to his creation. With this the relationship of the creature to God also becomes clear. It brings two sides of this relationship to the fore, namely not only the dependance of the creature on God but also the particularity and responsibility of the creature to the Creator. For Luther, God and the creature are not identical with each other but on the other hand are not so separated that there is no relationship between them. (We Japanese theologians, who are much influenced by K. Barth, tend to go to a false extreme by totally separating these two).

#### IV. GOD PRESENT AT THIS PRESENT TIME

Luther's term "gegenwertiglich" means not only present in a local sense but also at this present time. So, when he says that God is present, that means that God is present here and now. Therefore, when we are to discuss God, who is present in a creature and in his creation, we must give some consideration to God's presence in terms of time and history. God worked once for all and is working at this present moment. This is a typical, theological thought pattern of Luther's, namely that God created heaven and earth and is still creating (*Creare est semper novum facere*) and God, who saved men once for all, is saving men still.

When Luther speaks of Christian liberty in his famous treatise, he can say: "die freyheyt/die yhm Christus erworben vn geben hatt". This pair of verbs is also used by him in another context. In a larger treatise "Against the heavenly prophets" (1525), when he debated the real presence against Karl stadt, he writes:

We treat the forgiveness of sins in two ways. First, how it is achieved and

won. Second, how it is distributed and given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. But he has not distributed or given it on the cross. He has not won it in the supper or sacrament. There he has distributed and given it through the Word, as also in the gospel, where it is preached. He has won it once for all on the cross. But the distribution takes place continuously, before and after, from the beginning to the end of the world (WA 18, 203).

In this treatise he repeatedly mentions Christ's achievement of the forgiveness of sins on the cross once for all and his continuous distribution of it in the sacrament. (The parallel thought pattern is also found in the pair of terms "grace and gift," as in the Preface to the Romans and "Against Latomus".) God, who is present, works and acts in this way.

The same is said of the creation and preservation: "John points out . . . that God created the world and all creatures through the Word, His only-begotten Son and divine wisdom. But he also says that through Him God still governs and preserves His creation and will govern and preserve it until the end of time." "God the Father initiated and executed the creation of all things through the Word; and now He continues to preserve His creation through the Word, and that forever and ever." (WA 46, 558) In this way Luther does not see a large difference between creation and preservation. The Word and the Will of the creation still exists and through it God works His preservation and is present in everything. The preservation of the creation does not depend on the immanent faculty of the creature. Luther is totally against a deistic way of understanding creation, and also against the medieval idea of causes and effects. He says: "Just as we were created by Him without our own aid and agency, so we cannot maintain ourselves with our own mind" (*Ibid.*).

The Jews say that he was created on the sixth day together with the rest of the animals and that by a divine decree he was preserved up to that time. We Christians know that with God, creating and preserving are identical . . . If we believe that everything was created by God's power out of nothing, why should we not also believe this, that He can multiply and increase what is already in existence? (WA 43, 233).

The Word of creation, which is creating, governing and preserving, still acts and works at this present time, just as was the case in the very beginning. Any faculty or power of the creatures cannot take the place of this divine Word of the creation.

## V. NATURE UNDERSTOOD AS TOTAL

On philosophy and philosophical understanding, Luther always maintained that philosophy can give only a partial understanding, while theology can grasp the matter totally. That was the case, when he spoke on man in the disputation in 1536:

As this life is, such is the definition and knowledge of man, that is, fragmentary, fleeting, and exceedingly material (Th. 19). Theology, to be sure, from the fullness of its wisdom defines man as whole and perfect (Th. 20): Namely, that man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin . . . (Th. 21f.) (WA 39-I, 176).

One can describe Luther's reformation breakthrough as the struggle for the liberation of theology from philosophy (cf. W. Link, *Das Ringen Luthers*

...). Already in one of the most important documents in that period of breakthrough, namely in the lectures on Romans, Luther mentions his thoughts in regard to nature along the same lines. On Rm. 8:19 he comments:

The Apostle philosophizes and thinks about things in a different way than the philosophers and metaphysicians do. For the philosophers do so direct their gaze at the present state of things that they speculate only about what things are and what quality they have, but the apostle calls our attention away from a consideration of the present and from the essence and accidents of things and directs us to their future state . . . He no longer directs his attention to or inquires about the creation itself, but rather to that for which it is waiting (WA 56, 371).

Philosophy deals with creatures asking what they are now. As is the case with Luther, especially in this lecture, he looks at becoming (*fieri*), but not at being (*esse*). So here he maintains that theology asks what creatures should become. "Therefore you will be the best philosophers and the best explorers of the nature of things if you will learn from the apostle to consider the creation as it waits, groans, and travails, that is, as it turns away in disgust from what now is and desires that which is still in the future" (*ibid.*). Luther looks at nature in a total aspect, he "sees its final goal" (*ibid.*). The theological understanding of nature in its total aspect is therefore also a teleological one. God puts the world into a relationship with its origin and final goal. In his last lectures on Genesis he mentions the same line, using this example: "The hen lays an egg; this she keeps warm while a living body comes into being in the egg, which the mother later on hatches. The philosophers advance the reason that these events take place through the working of the sun and her belly. I grant this. But the theologians say, far more reliably, that these events take place through the working of the Word" (WA 42, 40).

## VI. EVERYTHING AS PREACHER

God, who created, still creates and preserves and can make full use of all creatures. Luther does not say that the natural life itself is God's revelation in a direct sense. But everything natural can have meaning as an organ communicating God's will. The whole creation as God's work gets light from God's salvation history. God uses anything to serve men. The creatures stand in the service of God to men. In Mt. 5:43-48 Luther explains it this way: "If you want to be called true children of the Father of Heaven, then let His example move you to live and act the way He does . . . He makes His sun rise every day, and He sends rain on the pious and on the wicked alike. Thus by mentioning these two things, the sun and the rain, He has summarized in a few words all the earthly blessings that God grants to the world." (WA 32, 403). God preserves and serves men through creatures. God's will to preserve men and the world becomes concrete and manifest in these ways.

And in God's service the creatures become preachers. A few lines later Luther mentions:

You will see that I show innumerable benefits not only to My Christians but even more to the wicked people, who are not grateful to Me but repay Me with their intense persecution of My Son and of the pious Christians. Thus you must be ashamed of yourself when you look at the sun, which preaches this to you every day, ashamed even when you are in a field and you look at a little flower or at the leaf of a tree. For this is written all over the leaves and the grass. There is no bird so small, indeed, no fruit

or berry or grain so tiny, that it does not show this to you . . . (*ibid.*, 404).

On Mt. 6:26-27 Luther explains in a similar direction:

He is making the birds our schoolmasters and teachers. It is a great and abiding disgrace to us that in the Gospel a helpless sparrow should become a theologian and a preacher to the wisest of men, and daily should emphasize this to our eyes and ears . . . In other words, we have as many teachers and preachers as there are little birds in the air. Their living example is an embarrassment to us.

As preacher a little bird also preaches Law and Gospel, accusing our sin and then forgiving us. Not only in a field in nature, but also in our "workshop" we have a number of preachers. The world of our daily business does not show the lack of those preachers.

If you are a manual laborer, you find that the Bible has been put into your workshop, into your hand, into your heart. It teaches and preaches how you should treat your neighbor. Just look at your tools . . . and you will read this statement inscribed on them. Everywhere you look, it stares at you. Nothing that you handle every day is so tiny that it does not continually tell you this, if you will only listen. Indeed, there is no shortage of preaching. You have as many preachers as you have transactions, goods, tools, and equipment in your house and home . . . (*ibid.*, p. 495).

## VII. BEING SIMPLY A MAN AS HE IS IN NATURE

Only in this God-centeredness and God-relatedness can man simply be man as he is in nature. In this sense sin is not only against God but also "contra naturam," against nature. Man is the problem in the whole creation. The sinful man always tends not to use the creatures rightly but to abuse them. While only God as Creator and at the same time Preserver, can use them and give them true meaning, man abuses them giving them other different meanings. In this way man is usurper of creation. Therefore Mary and the shepherds are Luther's ideal of the Christian, and the monks, medieval and new (Anabaptists) are just the opposite. "Anyone who takes it upon himself to start something special that goes beyond faith and the common occupations is and remains a monk" (*ibid.*, p. 514). Not to be someone special but to be simply a man is the Christian way of living.

You see, there (Rm. 13:1 & 8-10) you have the true mirror of a Christian life, based upon the commandment and ordinance of God. By way of contrast, the schismatic spirit comes along and says: 'Oh, this is so ordinary. There are so many wicked people in these stations, and it is secular. We have to look for something better.' So he goes and makes something special and strange . . . But if you are grounded in the Word of God, you can quickly judge and say: 'Where did God command you to set up these special stations and works in opposition to the universal stations that He has ordained? I am well aware of the fact that in every station there are many rascals as well as many pious people, but what do I care if someone misuses them? I will remain with the Word, which teaches me that such stations are good in spite of the fact that there are bad people in them. I watch this, and I am guided by it (*ibid.*, p. 516).

The famous Mary-interpretation in the Magnificat is the key description of a simple Christian:



How completely she traces all to God, lays claim to no works, no honour, no fame. She conducts herself as before, when she had nothing of all this; she demands no higher honors than before. . . She seeks not any glory, but goes about her usual household duties, milking the cows, cooking the meals, washing pots and kettles, sweeping out the rooms, and performing the works of maidservant or housemother in lowly and despised tasks, as though she cared nothing for such great gifts and graces. (WA 7.575)

With this God-centeredness and God-relatedness our Luther has much to say to the Asian situation, I believe. With this he brings something totally new to the Asian mind. However, we can also make full use of Asians living in and with nature and of Asian thinking. How to join these two should be our task in Asia today.

## The Significance of Luther's Thought on Nature in the Christian Witness in Asia Today

*Choong Chee Pang\**

Heinrich Bornkamm is right when he observes:

In the sixteenth century and its peripheries two genuine revolutions broke through the cover of occidental intellectual life. They were two revolutions. They contributed something new to the history of mankind, and, unlike humanism, they signified more than a return home to ancient wisdom and to the measured and adjusted humanity of bygone ages. The one is the revolution of Christian faith through Luther; the other is a revolution consisting in a new conception of natural science, introduced by Nicholas of Cusa and extending through Paracelsus and Copernicus to Bruno, Kepler, and Galileo.<sup>1</sup>

Luther was basically a man of his time. In his own profound mind the two revolutions could not be entirely divorced from one another. There is undoubtedly in Luther's religious faith and spiritual experience a picture of nature or the created world. This is based on his conviction that it is faith in God the Creator that determines man's understanding of himself, of his existence and salvation. For this reason, Luther can characterize faith in God the Creator as the ultimately decisive truth. In a sermon of 1523 he says:

"I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and of earth" is, without a doubt, the highest expression of our faith. Whoever genuinely believes this has already been helped, has once again been set right, and arrived at the place from which Adam fell . . . For such a man must have died to all things, to good and to evil, to death and to life, to hell and to heaven, and confess from his heart that he is able to do nothing by his own power.<sup>2</sup>

Although Luther's picture of nature was largely informed and shaped by the biblical revelation it also reflects his keen personal observation of nature. It was his strong faculty of observation which enabled him to derive a profusion of metaphors from the realm of nature. For Luther "All creation is the most beautiful book or Bible; in it God has described and portrayed Himself."<sup>3</sup> May we take this as a very profound Lutheran statement on "Natural Theology"? If so, there is obviously quite a lot of "Natural Theology" in Luther's thought.

Reaffirming and elaborating Paul's assertion in Romans 1:20 that God has always been known through His works of creation the Reformer comments:

The veneration of various gods in the idolatrous pagan religions presup-

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1. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*. Eng. tr. by Martin H. Bertram (Saint Louis, Missouri, 1965) p. 176.

2. WA 24, 18.

3. WA 48: 201. 5.

poses that men carry within themselves a conceptual notion of God and of the divine being. Without that, it would have been impossible for them to call their idols "gods", to ascribe divine attributes to them, to worship them, and to pray to them. Men have this idea of God, however, as Paul says, from God himself.<sup>4</sup>

This knowledge covers not only the metaphysical attributes of God but also His moral attributes including the awareness that God is good, gracious, merciful, and generous. However, Luther is also keenly aware of the limits to this knowledge of God: It does not give man certainty concerning his relationship with God, i.e. although man has the idea of God, he has no real experience of Him as his Creator and Saviour. Thus, Luther distinguishes between the general (*generalis*) and the proper (*propria*) knowledge of God. The latter, according to Luther, can only come from the Word of God. In spite of its limitation, it is often in and through the various phenomena of nature that the presence of God is most vividly and intimately felt by Luther. For him, it is often in the ordinary course of nature that the miraculous works of God are clearly perceived rather than in "extraordinary" events. Thus, the common things in nature are beautiful and precious. The tragic thing is that man has almost lost sight of this. "We possess such beautiful creatures; but we pay little attention to them, because they are so common," laments Luther.<sup>5</sup> Being a sensitive observer of nature Luther is able to use even the imagery of sunlight to help explain and justify his belief in the miracle of Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

Luther's use of imageries drawn from nature was simply inexhaustible. This is not only due to his freedom of poetic imagination but also because he is convinced that nature is a clear sign of the hidden wisdom and power of God. As such, nature, in Luther's view, is not to be explored and exploited for its own sake. Rather, it should be regarded as a faithful witness to God.

Luther's view of nature is a dynamic one. He perceives that there is still "much secret activity in nature."<sup>6</sup>

For Luther, creativity belongs to the very nature of God. God is God because He and only He creates.<sup>7</sup> Not only does God create, He also preserves everything:

He has not created the world as though he were a carpenter: building a house that he could walk away from when finished and let stand the way it is. On the contrary, he remains with and preserves everything he made. Otherwise it would neither hold up nor endure.<sup>8</sup>

Luther regards the constant preservation of creation by God at every point of space and time as an on-going act of new creation:

Daily we can see the birth into this world of new human beings, young children who were non-existent before; we behold new trees, new animals on the earth, new fish in the water, new birds in the air. And such creation and preservation will continue until the Last Day.<sup>9</sup>

4. WA 56, 179; LW 26, 399.

5. *Table Talk*, 3, 3390.

6. *Kirchenpostille* (1522): 10, 11: 560, 9 quoted in Bornkamm, p. 181.

7. See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Eng. tr. by Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia, 1975), p. 105.

8. WA 21, 521: 46, 558.

9. WA 46, 559; LW 22, 27.

Being fully convinced that God is actively present, working and creating in all reality, Luther is able to describe forcefully the divine presence in the Eucharist:

It is God who creates, effects, and preserves all things through his almighty power and right hand, as our Creed confesses . . . If he is to create or preserve it, however, he must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects. Therefore, indeed, he himself must be present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being, on all sides, through and through, below and above, before and behind, so that nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power.<sup>10</sup>

Although the divine power is actively present in all things it is not consumed in the reality of the world. God and the world are never identical. God continues to transcend the world as its Creator and Preserver.<sup>11</sup> This point is of vital importance in the Asian Context. For Luther's concept of God is radically different from pantheistic and animistic thinking.

For Luther, God's work of creation can never be separated from His Word. It is in fact the Divine Word that has brought the world into being. Ultimately, man must search for God where the Word is:

For although He is everywhere, in all creatures, and although I could find Him in stone, in fire, in water, or even in a rope (for He surely is there), still He does not want me to look for Him apart from the Word . . . Search for Him where the Word is. There you will surely find Him. Otherwise you only tempt God and establish idolatry.<sup>12</sup>

Not only are all things made through the Word, they are also preserved by the same dynamic Word:

In the doctrine of creation it is of primary importance that we know and believe that God has not withdrawn His sustaining hand from His handiwork. Therefore when St. John declares that everything made was made through the Word, one must also realize that all things created are also preserved by His Word. Otherwise they could not continue to exist very long.<sup>13</sup>

Commenting on Hebrews 1:3 Luther says,

This participle, "upholding" has special emphasis and is a Hebrew idiom . . . What we call "to preserve", the Hebrews state more suitably with "to uphold", which expresses a certain tender and, so to speak, motherly care for the things which He created and which should be cherished.<sup>14</sup>

Following the theological tradition of the Church, Luther believes that creating means creating "out of nothing" (*ex nihilo*):

It is his nature to create all things out of nothing. And it is his own most proper nature that he calls those things into being which do not exist.<sup>15</sup> But for Luther, it is more than a tradition. It is a vision. It is the very basis of

10. WA 23, 133; LW 37, 57.

11. WA 23, 133; LW 37, 57; WA 26, 337; LW 37, 228.

12. *Sermon von dem Sakrament* (1526): 19; 492, 19, quoted in Bornkamm, p. 191.

13. LW 22, 29.

14. LW 29, 112.

15. WA 40, 154.

man's hope of salvation, i.e., God takes the man who is actually *nothing* before Him, because of sin and death, and makes him a new creation "out of nothing" (*ex nihilo*). Luther often expresses this profound truth in his typically paradoxical manner:

The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.<sup>16</sup>  
You (God) give us life when you permit us to be killed.<sup>17</sup>

It is in the context of these characteristics of God's creativity that Luther's doctrine of justification can best be understood. Luther expressly includes justification as part of the paradoxical creative activity of God:

God enjoys bringing light out of darkness and making things out of nothing . . . Thus he has created all things and thus he helps those who have been abandoned, he justifies the sinners, he gives life to the dead, and he saves the damned.<sup>18</sup>

Luther's doctrine of justification is thus decisively based on his understanding of creation. The justification of the sinner is perhaps the most exciting and glorious of all the specific examples of the way in which God creates out of nothing.

Luther is neither a dreamer nor a romantic. He is a realist, in the sense that he always looks at things from the perspective of biblical realism. As a biblical realist Luther shares the apostle Paul's agony over the vanity and bondage to which the whole of creation is subject. According to the profound perception of Paul in Romans 8 the vanity and bondage to which nature remains subdued is the sin-laden humanity which nature must serve unwillingly. Luther paints a vivid picture of nature's repeated attempts to shake off this accursed dominion, by means of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. On this Bornkamm writes:

In Luther's paeon on nature we hear an undertone of sadness—a tone different from that of the contemporary Renaissance mysticism or even of Bruno's new pious religion which jubilantly announces the harmony of the cosmos. Luther's viewpoint does not have a mythological tinge, as some might be tempted to judge; no, it finds its being in a conviction, flowing forth with poetical force, of the loneliness and the forsakenness of sinful man in the world.<sup>19</sup>

Luther criticizes the philosophers and metaphysicians for failing to see the reality of nature's agony and predicament on account of the sin of humanity:

For the philosophers so direct their gaze at the present state of things that they speculate only about what things are and what quality they have . . .<sup>20</sup>

"You will be the best of philosophers and the best explorers of the nature of things", says Luther, "if you will learn from the apostle to consider the creation as it waits, groans, and travails."<sup>21</sup> Luther does not, however, en-

16. WA 56, 375.

17. WA 31, 171.

18. WA 40, 154.

19. Bornkamm, p. 192.

20. LW 25, 360.

21. LW 25, 361.

tain the gnostic idea and speculation about a possible fall of the entire creation. Creation has undoubtedly been subject to abuse, exploitation and disturbance ever since the fall of man. But it is not contaminated by sin. It is still good: "The nature of animals has remained as it was created."<sup>22</sup>

Commenting on Romans 1:20 Luther says,

For all the things that God made were "very good" (Gen. 1:31) and are still good, as the apostle says in I Tim. 4:4: "Everything created by God is good", and in Titus 1:15: "To the pure all things are pure". Therefore the creation becomes vain, evil, and harmful from outside itself, and not by its own fault . . .<sup>23</sup>

In Romans 8:18-25 the Apostle Paul is concerned with both the salvation of mankind and the liberation of the whole of creation from bondage and decay:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the Sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the Children of God. (Roman 8:19-21).

In his profound insight and vision the Apostle sees clearly the vital solidarity between mankind and the whole of creation. If creation has to bear the burden on account of the sin of fallen humanity it will also share "the glorious liberty of the Children of God". This eschatological hope is fully shared by Luther whose expectation of the Last Day is concerned not only with the future of the individual, but also with the fact that history and the old world are coming to an end. For Paul, as well as for the great Reformer, this eschatological hope for the salvation of mankind and the liberation of creation is based solidly on the historical resurrection of Christ and the creative power of the Holy Spirit. As such, eschatological events are actually taking place in the midst of the present. They are existential realities. Luther's dynamic view of eschatology becomes the more impressive in the context of sixteenth century Christendom when the expectation of the Coming Age became less and less intense. Although the traditional belief in the future was still found in Church dogma, the emphasis as well as the vital sense of urgency which was once placed on it were largely lost. The consciousness of history was drastically changed and the understanding of it had become very static. Against the sixteenth century European context Luther's understanding of history and the future of the world are not only dynamic but also prophetic. In fact authentic prophetism is always dynamic and not static.

For Luther the goal of human history and the future of the entire creation are absolutely inseparable. Not only does he expect the individual to continue to live in the future beyond death and that human history will meet its *eschaton* and find its consummation in the Kingdom of God, the entire world, Luther believes, will find its renewal and perfection in God's new creation.<sup>24</sup>

The belief that God does not abandon His creation but transforms, renews, redeems and ultimately glorifies it was a much needed corrective to the

22. *Table Talk*, 1, 678.

23. LW 25, 362.

24. WA 37, 68; LW 34, 139.

prevailing eschatology of the sixteenth century which was often "worldless" and which excluded all creation apart from the individual.

But like the Apostle Paul, the Reformer has to confess humbly that much of the truth concerning the future of mankind and the entire creation is still hidden and must remain a matter of hope. This is how Luther expresses it when commenting on Romans 8:24, "Now hope that is seen is not hope":

Thus hope changes the one who hopes into what is hoped for, but what is hoped for does not appear. Therefore hope transfers him into the unknown, the hidden, and the dark shadows, so that he does not even know what he hopes for, and yet he knows what he does not hope for. Thus the soul has become hope and at the same time the thing hoped for, because it resides in that which it does not see, that is, in hope.<sup>25</sup>

There is perhaps hardly a more appropriate way of summing up the great Reformer's thought on the future of nature and redeemed humanity than to quote from his comment on II Peter 3:13, "But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells":

How this will take place we do not know, except that it is promised that there will be the kind of heaven and earth in which there will be no sins, but that only righteousness and God's Children will dwell there . . . Here one may be concerned about whether the blessed will live in heaven or on earth. Here the text gives the impression that they will dwell on earth, so that all heavens and earth will be a new Paradise, in which God resides. For God dwells not only in heaven but everywhere. Therefore the elect will be where He is.<sup>26</sup>

What have been briefly considered so far are only certain aspects of Luther's thought on nature. It is by no means an exhaustive study. Understanding Luther's thought is one thing—which is itself a difficult task—considering its relevance and significance in the Christian witness in Asia today is quite another.

The moment we try to bring Luther's thought to bear upon the Christian witness in Asia we immediately find ourselves involved in a most delicate and controversial issue, namely, the matter of contextualization and the problem of the communication of the Gospel. The understanding of context is obviously one of the most important prerequisites of contextualization. This in itself is an enormous task. Asia's vastness alone is enough to discourage anyone from attempting seriously to understand the complexity of its socio-political and religious dynamics and realities. Here in Asia there is simply no one homogeneous context but a great multiplicity of contexts. Consequently there is also no universally accepted norm, standard or methodology by which Asia may be categorically measured, perceived and interpreted.

Apart from the already problematic socio-political, religious and cultural barriers that exist between Luther's Europe and modern Asia, there is also the long time-gap between the age of Luther and that of the contemporary Asian: a gap of about half a millennium. In light of the foregoing preliminary remarks we must patiently and graciously bear with whatever generalization, misinterpretations and distortions are bound to occur in our modest attempt

25. LW 25, 364.

26. LW 30, 197-8.

to bring Luther's insight on nature to bear upon the Christian witness in Asia today.

Although there is a great variety of religious systems and traditions in Asia, they all seem to have one basic feature in common, that is, they are all nature-conscious; ranging from the most highly developed and sophisticated Taoist-Confucianist system down to the most primitive form of animism. They are nature-conscious in the sense that they all must grapple and wrestle constantly and seriously with nature in their attempt to apprehend the totality of existence. In the end most, if not all of them, have become naturalistic and monistic in character. Thus, what Hendrik Kraemer says here about the Confucianist-Taoist tradition in China is also, to a very large extent, true of most parts of East Asia:

The highest category of the Chinese apprehension of the world and of life is Totality, or the Primeval and Eternal Order (Tao), which is the moulding principle of the universe. It manifests itself in a process of antithetic but complementary rhythms, such as Yang and Yin, macrocosm and microcosm, which correspond with and counter-balance each other. To preserve the harmony of this primeval rhythm is the meaning of the natural and the human world. The law of nature and the law of human social life, namely morality, are essentially one. Man and the cosmos are one undivided unity of life. Primeval Totality or Order (Tao) realizes itself in the ordered life of man, and the reverse. Therefore the first commandment of all Chinese ethics is to live in harmony with Tao, and the second, which is like to it, is that the traditional rules and etiquettes through which society and state function reflect—or ought to—the behaviour of the cosmos. To keep this harmony intact and to find herein the true life is the foundation of both Confucianism and Taoism. Tao and Li are the appropriate terms to express these two cardinal aspects of the Chinese apprehension of life and the world. It is a symbol of the Chinese apprehension that Chu Hsih, the great systematizer of Neo-Confucianism under the Sung dynasty, knows in his system only cosmology and ethics. Confucianism and Taoism have each elaborated this naturalistic monism and this cosmic-human monism in their characteristic way, virtually becoming radical contrasts, but essentially springing from the same life-impulses. Both coincide in the immanentist, anthropocentric and relativistic key-note which pervades the background of all their attitudes. Here again not the problem of truth but of realization of spiritual values is the guiding principle. The hyper-individualistic ethics of Taoist Wu-wei and the aristocratic social ethics of Confucian conformity and etiquette, in which self-mastery is the way to world-mastery, are both thoroughly immanentist and anthropocentric. Not the Will of God, but the idea of the "Perfect, Holy Man" whose inner being is one with Tao, and that of the "Noble Gentleman," is the norm of ethical striving and aspiration. A transcendent norm of ethics is impossible in this naturalistic apprehension. The command of Heaven is to be found in the heart. All ethics are a form of human wisdom, never the expression of a personal divine Will which is the Measure and Judge of all life and action. The whole spirit of Chinese civilization is that of humanism; it is one of mankind's classic achievements in humanism. In this idealism of harmony good and evil are, of course, no real contrasts. Everything or every condition that breathes harmony is eo ipso good, for instance universal welfare . . . In its sphere the conception of transcen-



dence and of so-called pure spirituality of God is, properly speaking, absurd.<sup>27</sup>

We have good reason to believe that even after thirty-three years of Communist rule—whether it is in the form of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, Maoist Revisionism, or Post-Gang of Four heterodoxy—traditional Taoist-Confucianist thinking still has a very strong hold on the mind of the Chinese. And this represents a quarter of the human race! Following the “open-door” policy of the present Chinese regime in recent years there are clear indications and signs of a resurgence of Confucianism, Taoism and other religious-philosophical systems in the Chinese mainland. In Taiwan, both Orthodox Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism are still very influential systems to be seriously reckoned with. This phenomenon, in varying degrees, is also to be found in other parts of East Asia including Japan and Korea. As recently as February of this year, the Singapore government decided to include Confucianism in its wholesale effort to promote moral and religious education in Singapore.<sup>28</sup> It is perhaps important to note that this has come as a directive from the Prime Minister himself.<sup>29</sup>

As long as the Taoist-Confucianist apprehension of the totality of life is based on naturalism, monism and humanism it will continue to pose a challenge to the Christian faith, which is essentially a witness to the living and personal God who is the Creator of the universe and Lord of history. It is precisely here that Luther's thought on nature becomes immediately significant and relevant, especially with its emphasis and paradoxical affirmation on the immanence as well as the transcendence of God. Ultimately it is the personal and divine will of the Creator that must be constantly sought and not the harmony between man and his universe. Because it is God alone who is the Author as well as the Sustainer of harmony.

What has been said about the Taoist-Confucianist tradition is also, to a considerable extent true of Hinduism although the latter may express itself in many diverse forms: in theism, polytheism, pantheism, atheism and materialism. Thus, it is often said to be impossible to define or understand Hinduism, and rightly so:

it is a vast jungle of religious cults, sects, institutions and tendencies, including every possible variation of human religious expression: the serene ecstatic experience of oneness with the attributeless Pure Essence of the heroic, lonely mystic; the exuberant loving worship of the devotee or *bhakta*, who exults in the deliverance wrought by Ishvara . . . the village-cults and feasts, partly touching and partly repulsive, because steeped in a confusing and degrading atmosphere of polytheism, daemonism and magic. One could go on endlessly and still not succeed in giving an adequate impression of the content of the religious-complex that goes by the name of Hinduism.<sup>30</sup>

Yet, even in this vast religio-philosophical jungle of Hinduism the dis-

27. Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, 7th Printing, 1969), pp. 184-5.

28. See *The Straits Times* on Thursday, February 4, 1982, front page.

29. “The First Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Goh Keng Swee, who disclosed this yesterday at a press briefing at the Ministry of Education, said Mr. Lee Kuan Yew put this proposal before him two weeks’ ago”. *Ibid.*

30. Kraemer, pp. 158-9.

cerning mind can still perceive some of those main features which make Hinduism Hindu. For example, its naturalistic monism upon which the whole of existence is apprehended and its innate assumption that man is essentially one with Nature. In the mighty ocean of naturalistic monism every form of expression is possible and legitimate. There is thus in Hinduism a most impressive but ever intriguing hospitality that seems absolutely inexhaustible. In this sense Hinduism knows no criterion, and cannot possibly have one when it comes to the vital matter of truth. Again, as Kraemer has rightly observed,

Just as Nature is not interested in truth, but in manifestation, in realizations, in shades, so Hinduism is not interested in religious truth but in the endless possibilities of religious realization and expression.<sup>31</sup>

Naturalistic monism finds its fullest expression in the concept of *moksha*, which means salvation or deliverance. *Moksha*, to put it simply in Hindu thinking, means "absolute separateness from all duality or plurality of existence and a return to the primordial Oneness of Totality."<sup>32</sup> A closer look at the diverse religious phenomena in Asia will reveal that this deep-rooted desire to return to the "primordial Oneness of Totality" is not peculiar to Hinduism and other highly developed religious systems of Asia, it is also a dominant idea in many less sophisticated forms of tribal and animistic religions, whether in Asia or in many other parts of the world. Again, the primary concern here is not that of man's relationship with God, the Creator personally conceived, but with an abstract, impersonal and mysterious Idea.

Unlike the Confucianist tradition where there is a clear focus on man as a social and political being and thus gives man a recognized place in society so that he serves a useful function within the social order, Hinduism has never succeeded in liberating itself from its caste-ridden bondage. As long as its deep-seated idea of *dharma* is upheld, Hinduism will have no chance setting itself free from its abhorrent caste-system, because it is *dharma* which gives the Hindu caste-system its divine sanction. Precisely because it is a divinely sanctioned social order, the individual is obliged to live according to the *dharma* of his caste. So the vicious cycle goes on forever. The challenge that the whole caste-system poses before the Christian witness in Asia is an enormous one. Enormous because it has to do with the biblical view of man, especially his dignity, honour, and worth in the world and before God (*Coram Deo*). And the Christian view of man is solidly based on the biblical doctrine of creation, especially on the clear notion that all human beings are created equally by God who shows no partiality. Luther clearly has a great deal to say on this. From the view-point of Christian witness, the concern here is not only with the religious aspect of the doctrine but its socio-political and ethical implications as well.

Closely allied to the foregoing ideas of Oneness of Totality, *moksha* and *dharma* are Hindu understandings of *Ātman* according to which the existence of the individual and personal being is a mere illusion. Stretched to its logical conclusion this line of thinking cannot possibly admit any notion of individual responsibility and accountability. The socio-political and ethical implications of this doctrine are simply inconceivable. If individuality is denied no real distinction can possibly be made between God, man and things of the world. Moreover, the Hindu doctrine of *māyā*, whether it is represented by Upa-

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-1.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

nishadic philosophy or the *advaita* of Sankara, virtually denies the reality of the created world. When the reality of the created world is denied it will be very difficult to conceive of any possibility of responsible participation in the things of the world. This can only lead to either passive world-denying or thoroughgoing materialism. The absence of an adequate doctrine of creation in Hinduism also gives rise to pantheistic thinking which makes the world indistinguishable from Brahman. Although ideas or conceptions of God or the Divine are forever present in Hinduism, its monistic and pantheistic tendencies are so steeped in an atmosphere of immanence that there is virtually no room for real transcendence. Only Luther's paradoxical approach which is solidly based on biblical revelation on creation can do real justice to divine immanence and transcendence.

If the reality of the created world is denied, history, which can only occur within the time and space of the created order, cannot be taken seriously either. Thus the Hindu world-view evolves around an endless cycle. *Karma* and redemption are conceived within this frame of mind. The cyclic view of life knows no real history and eschatology. By a striking contrast there is much dynamism in Luther's view of history and eschatology which is based on an equally dynamic understanding of creation. This point is of vital importance for authentic Christian witness in Asia. Asia has indeed reached a crucial point of decision. Asian people must be awakened to face the reality of the *eschaton*. They are in desperate need of a real sense of urgency. The whole of existence must no longer be conceived in endless cyclical terms but in linear terms; in terms of the entire creation moving towards its final goal. In view of the impending judgement of God even a linear understanding of history and eschatology is not enough. Time must be perceived not only in terms of *Chronos* but also in terms of *Kairos*. It is the *Kairos* of God that creates a crisis situation for man. And a crisis situation always demands a clear-cut choice of either/or from man. Only this dynamic and existential perception of history can do real justice to the biblical view of creation. It is here that Luther's thought on nature once again finds its immediate relevance for the Christian witness in Asia today. There is hardly any other area of concern that is more urgent than this in Asia today. For time is really running out for Asia eschatologically speaking. People here are indeed living on "borrowed time".

In the naturalistic-monistic system there is undoubtedly much concern with man's relation to nature. There is, however, hardly any religio-philosophical system which expresses and affirms the sense of solidarity between man and nature more clearly and consistently than the biblical revelation. This sense of solidarity is taken most seriously in Luther's thought on man and nature, as has been the case in his commentary on Romans 8:18-25 as well as in many other contexts. However, solidarity here does not mean identification so that man and nature become indistinguishable. It is used here as a relational term with the emphasis on man's divinely ordained stewardship in the world, especially on man's divine responsibility for the created order as God's faithful agent. One of the major crises in the world today is precisely the loss of this sense of stewardship. The deplorable pollution of the environment; the relentless exploitation of nature; the irresponsible use and abuse of natural resources; the lack of any sense of equality and proportion in the distribution of wealth derived from natural resources together with a host of other ecological concerns are no longer confined to Asia. They are also global issues. These issues must be seriously and

thoroughly dealt with in the whole context of man's stewardship, responsibility and accountability before God. This is ultimately a *theological* issue.

God's original creation is characterized by order and harmony. But order and harmony have been disrupted by man's rebellion against God, the Creator. Man's rebellious act has resulted in strained relations on different levels: the relation between man and God, the relation between man and nature, and the relation between man and his neighbour. The ground is said to have been "cursed" on account of man's sin. That the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament has faithfully and consistently preserved this profound sense of solidarity between man and nature is clear from passages such as Isaiah 24:3-6:

The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled; for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.

It is with the same sense of solidarity that the Apostle Paul expresses himself with such a profound insight and vision concerning the future of man and the whole of creation in Romans 8:18-25. No wonder the great Reformer finds the passage so exciting and challenging. It is, however, significant to observe that both in Isaiah 24 and Romans 8 the pollution and the decay of nature are set against the context of man's relation to God. In Isaiah 24:5, 6:

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, . . .

Man's behaviour in the world has a direct bearing on his environment. The pollution of the earth is believed to have been caused by the religious and moral acts of man. In Romans 8:18-25 the liberation of creation from bondage is inseparable from the ultimate redemption of the Children of God. Therefore, "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the Sons of God" (v. 19). It has become sufficiently clear that while the naturalistic-monistic tradition is more concerned with man's relation to the whole cosmos than with his relation to God, the biblical tradition which Luther faithfully follows gives primary importance to man's reconciliation with God. Only the reconciled can become the reconciler. Only those who have peace with God can play the role of a peace-maker. St. Paul must have clearly perceived this great truth when he says in II Corinthians 5:17-19:

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (II Corinthians 5:17-19).

In Asia today there is much craving for advance in science and technology and for modernization in order to solve the problems of food and a host of other bare necessities created by Asia's ever-increasing population. Unless this craving, however legitimate it may appear, is being effectively checked, the problem of pollution and other related ecological issues will continue to be aggravated. When it comes to the matter of the tapping of natural re-

sources it is very difficult to know if those measures taken are actually justifiable and are eventually benefiting the needy Asians or whether they are simply relentless means of satisfying the greed of the exploiters who are neither concerned with the welfare of the needy nor with the sanctity of nature itself. The tragic and undeniable fact is that in many parts of Asia today the earth, the forest and the beach etc., often lie polluted because men have "transgressed the laws".

Luther has a particular fondness for God's common creatures, whether they are young children, animals, trees, flowers or plants. To him the common and the ordinary are beautiful and precious. "We possess such beautiful creatures; but we pay little attention to them, because they are so common", Luther complains.<sup>33</sup>

Although many exciting and extraordinary things are found in Asia, she remains largely a land of the common and ordinary, especially common and ordinary people. Overwhelmed by the ever-growing sea of humanity in Asia it is almost impossible to think or believe that individuals still count or that they are still precious. Asian Christians must continue to bear witness to the sanctity of human life and human existence, especially to the honour, glory and dignity which God the Creator and Father of all mankind has bestowed upon all His Children. What God has created man must not call common or profane (Acts 10:15). Luther seems to have seen this point clearly in his exegesis on John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth". In the flesh which is a "common" creation of God Luther sees the incarnate Christ identifying himself with sinful humanity and draws great comfort from it:

Thus the most precious treasure and the strongest consolation we Christians have is this: that the Word, the true and natural Son of God, became man, with flesh and blood like that of any other human; that He became incarnate for our sakes in order that we might enter into great glory . . .<sup>34</sup>

Having become a true and natural man Christ "dwelt among us":

He did not withdraw from people, retire into some shelter, escape into the desert, where no one could hear, see, or touch Him. But he appeared publicly, preaching and performing miracles, thereby enabling all the people who were about Him, among whom He moved and lived, to hear and touch Him.<sup>35</sup>

It is this incarnate Christ whom we must proclaim in Asia today. For Christ alone is the hope for Asia.

33. *Table Talk*, 5, 5539.

34. LW 22, 110.

35. LW 22, 112.

# Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Classical Asian Religions

## A Response to the Paper

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*Andrew Chiu\**

First of all, the present reactor wants to congratulate the Symposium for having chosen the right person to present this topic. The paper not only in its format and content is scholarly and has lasting value, it also evokes some urgent questions for us to tackle, especially Lutherans, who are "working within this Eastern horizon of thought which is closer to the biblical and scientific understandings of nature"<sup>1</sup> than it is to the Newtonian. After carefully reading the whole presentation, the present reactor is convinced to agree with the writer's concluding words that "the indigenizing theologian should find it easier to forge a doctrine of nature which is faithful to the biblical message and meaningful to modern man." Nevertheless, there are three points the present reactor would like to offer to this Second Luther Studies Symposium, namely, convincing, puzzling, and requiring.

### **Convincing**

Apart from the many citations mentioned in footnote 1 of his paper, Dr. Arnold M.K. Yeung's statement that "the recent upsurge of interest in the world of nature, particularly in relation to creation and cosmology, is timely," is convincing because the 1984 Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation which will take place in Hungary is going to emphasize that subject.

The more convincing fact is that the traditional thinking of the church, which assigns the natural to scientists and the supernatural to theologians, has proved damaging to the church and brings science and theology into greater conflict. For Christian faith does include beliefs about the relations between God and the world. Our world can not be a closed system since Lord God the Creator is totally the source of all good things and through His Son, Jesus Christ, all things were created, upheld and redeemed.

It is also true that the history of dogma has witnessed "a Babylonian captivity of theology from the era of Augustine onward." For through the Medieval Scholastic metaphysics the dualism of Hellenistic origin has come back and gripped Western thought ever since.

Via a scholarly treatment, Dr. Yeung's presentation has shown to us that "dualism is not an infrastructure of Eastern culture." And he has located "strands of living cultural thought in the East which are unmistakably wholistic and non-deterministic" and he has also identified "common features

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1. Unless otherwise specified, quotations in this paper of reaction are taken directly from Dr. Arnold M.K. Yeung's presentation, "Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Classical Asian Religions".

among them which are relevant to our contemporary understanding of nature and the natural."

In short, Dr. Yeung's whole paper is very convincing.

### Puzzling

However, there are three items that puzzled the present reactor while reading Dr. Yeung's paper:

1. Although the writer stated in his Introduction that "our aim is to establish a norm rather than to note the particular," since the paper deals with "Nature and the Natural in *Asian Thinking*," nevertheless, the writer mentions mainly people who adhere to Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism. The present reactor is wondering: What understanding of physical reality would the people of the rest of Asia have? Would they also acknowledge the unformalizable in the universe and hold a holistic view of the universe?
2. The sub-title of the paper is "Classical Asian Religions." Hence the writer selected texts from Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism, the three strands of thought for the study. Asia is the home of many ancient religions, for example, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Islam, not to mention Shintoism, Sikhism, etc. What have the people who adhere to these latter religions to say about this topic?
3. Chinese compose almost a quarter of the world's population and about two fifths of them are in Asia. The writer treats only one of the schools of thought in Chinese. The more sophisticated school of thought is Confucianism.

Although many Confucians would not consider their way of life as a religion, however, it functions as a religion in many respects. It is also true, as Lin Yu-tang has pointed out:

After 136 B.C., a sharp division was made. Officials liked Confucius and writers and poets liked Chuangtse (Chuang Tze) and Laotse (Lao Tzu), and when the writers and poets became officials, they liked Confucius openly and Laotse and Chuangtse secretly.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, there are assertions of Confucianism related to our present concern, such as the union of nature and man, to which the Symposium probably ought to pay some attention, too.

### Requiring

In order "to forge a doctrine of nature which is faithful to the biblical message and meaningful to modern man," the thirty-some people who have come from all over the world, especially with a majority of us coming from Asia for the sake of this quest, *Nature and the Natural in Asian Thought*, in addition to offering some answers to the present reactor's puzzlement (as mentioned in the foregoing), requires something more for us to ponder. Some guidelines might be worked out so that the churches in Asia may have a way to follow in the quest.

The wider circle of the world not only consists of people who adhere to some religion. Today, even religious people in Asia, as well as in the whole

2. *The Wisdom of Laoze* (New York: The Modern Library, 1948), p. 4.

world, are plagued with materialism. How would modern men, especially those who are living in urban and industrialized places, understand a holistic universe? And what would he or she care about the nature and the natural in order that they themselves may benefit and give praises to God the Creator?

Since this is a *Luther Studies* Symposium, has Luther had anything to say about this subject? Furthermore, if we want to be "faithful to the biblical message," what has the Bible said about the topic?

Our aim is not only to say something to the world, but also to the church. How would common people and the common church member understand this important subject and pay attention to the wrestlings we have been given in these days?

All these questions require much. Though the world is not depending on us alone, the Spirit, it seems to the present reactor, is expecting much from us.



# Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Asian Animism and Primal Religion

## The Response and the Reaction to the Paper Read by Dr.A.A. Sitompul

*S. John Tilak\**

### **Esteemed Chairman and respected delegates to the Luther Studies Symposium:**

Let me at the very outset, thank the Asia Secretary of the LWF, the Rev. Satoru Kishii and the Chairperson of the preparation committee of this symposium, Prof. Yoshikazu Tokuzen, for offering me this opportunity, not only to participate in this second Luther Studies Symposium but also to respond and react to the paper read by Dr. A.A. Sitompul on the topic: Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Asian Animism and Primal Religion. Let me first try to evaluate the general contents of the paper and later raise some critical issues in the total context of the general theme of our Symposium.

Dr. A.A. Sitompul has just presented an excellent paper with a number of valid references and relevant quotations from renowned scholars on the subject: Asian Animism and Primal Religion with particular reference to Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking. In his paper, he has wisely restricted his subject to the Batak understanding of the primal religion of Animism, though he also mentions the elements of primal religions in Australia, Africa, India, etc. (refer to page 18) and in the Philippines (refer to page 25). In his paper, he has adequately discussed five main categories of primal religious beliefs, viz:

1. Totality and Relationship
2. The Transcendence and Immanence of God
3. Vital Life
4. Predestination and Freedom
5. Liberation for a New Creation

In light of these five main categories, let me raise some issues for our critical understanding within the larger perspective of our general theme: Nature and the Natural in Luther's Thought.

### **1. Totality and Relationship**

Totality and relationship, synthetic and concrete ways of thinking, the conception of totality and of the unbroken, and primeval unity dominate the whole range of reality in nature and human life in the Primal religions. These are the fundamental aspects of animistic and primal religions. But one must observe that this 'totalitarian thinking' is the direct result of a pantheistic idea of God. For animistic and primal religions, God is All and All is God, which is *pantheism*. But in light of the Word of God, we believe in God, who *created*

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(Hebrew verb: *bara*) this whole universe and who lives *in and above* the created world. Yahweh is not the God of pantheism but the Lord of *pan-en-theism*, the creator of the whole of Nature! The idea of creation is far from pantheism, deism, emanation, generation and evolution. Nature is *not* divine. God, the Living Creator, is divine, who is *in* and *apart* from nature, His creation.

## 2. The Transcendence and Immanence of God

Through the idea of High God and the relation with the three lesser gods, the Batak primal religion wants to maintain the transcendence and the immanence of God. But in reality, it cannot hold the transcendence and the immanence of the High God in the most unique and distinctive sense, since the High God in reality is distant from the world and the lesser three gods have too closely identified themselves with the natural and human world. The concept of the transcendence and immanence of God must be critically analyzed and the distinctive relationship between the Creator and the creation must be examined.

## 3. Vital Life

The concept of 'Anima' and 'life' are fundamental ideas in primal religions. The important question is whether 'Life is God' or 'God is Life'. The Lord God is Life and the source of all living beings. Further what is the relationship between the 'Cosmic Tree' and God, the Creator of the Universe? The 'Cosmic Tree' generates and brings forth living beings, whereas in the Word of God, God creates the universe and everything out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*).

## 4. Predestination and Freedom

Though certain amounts of free will and freedom are expressed in primal religions, ultimately, the law of Karma, or Fate, rules over the actions of men. We can find many forms of fatalism in animistic primal religions but true freedom of the individual person is not fully expressed in primal religious beliefs. Determinism rules throughout these religions. Here one must go deeper to understand what is the nature and content of the moral freedom of man in his human life as expressed in these primal religions.

## 5. Liberation for a New Creation

Here liberation is a liberation from guilt, shame and punishment, and not in the real sense salvation from the sinful existence of man, separated from the communion of His Creator, the Lord. In these primal religions, one clings and holds fast to the immortality of the soul and its close relationship to living relatives and people. The resurrection of the body and the concept of a 'New Heaven and Earth' is completely unknown.

On the other hand, in the present day world of secularism, the totalitarian, synthetic and concrete ways of thinking in primal religions can definitely offer deep and new dimensions for approaching nature in its wholeness and moreover, the close community-based life and thinking can also bring new insights to the twentieth century way of individualistic life. Ultimately, the primary problem is how to redeem secularity from secularism, individuality from individualism, and community from communalism. If these animistic

and primal religious beliefs and ways of living can help us solve these problems, we can appreciate and appropriate some of their elements. But in the last analysis, we of the Christian faith, must affirm and confess that the Lord is the One and Only Creator, who preserves, sustains, cares and governs the whole universe, being the Maker of heaven and earth!

# Nature and the Natural in Luther's Thought

## Reaction to a Paper by Yoshikazu Tokuzen

Maurice Schild\*

The term nature is difficult to define. For our purposes I agree with Professor Tokuzen's opening definition; and the first part of this reaction is meant to underline several of the insights which he then puts forward. Toward the end I mention related matters which might be treated more generally under the First Article of the Creed. Whether that has validity may be questioned. Certainly we would wish to get clear glimpses of the real Reformer and man who, though, as it were, at home in his own element of expositing the sacred Scriptures, yet remained in open contact with the natural world which he accordingly described as "that most beautiful book or Bible in which God has described and portrayed himself" (WA 48, 201, 5).

### 1. God and Nature, and the Nature of God

#### (a) *Divine presence, and hiddenness*

In the great *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528, Luther takes Zwingli to task for thinking of God's omnipresence in crudely spacial terms, as if God were an immense being filling and towering over the world—"just like a sack full of straw bulging above and below" (LW 37, 227f). We might well compare and contrast that with the God Luther proclaims in the *Large Catechism* (1529): "... he is an eternal fountain which overflows with sheer goodness and pours forth all that is good in name and in fact" (Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959, p. 368). God is not enclosed, not even partially, never imprisoned in nature; yet—as the *Confession* goes on to express it—He is wholly present in all and in every part of the universe, and, at the same time, altogether beyond it; God is both supernatural and in and through all nature as its unretired Creator. All creation is thus continually involved with the dynamics of God's creative presence and his goodness in time and space.

The Reformer was thus able to affirm the omnipresence of the Creator in unique terms reminiscent of, though not dependent on, the teaching of a *co-incidentia oppositorum* by the fifteenth century bishop, Nicolas of Cusa.<sup>1</sup>

For Luther conclusions built upon a causality principle cannot reveal the God we need to see but will only lead to a hidden God: "... although he is everywhere, he does not permit himself to be so grasped; he can easily shell himself so that you get the shell but not the kernel. Why? Because it is one

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1. A helpful first introduction to these ideas is Cusa and Luther, in Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Thought* (London: SCM, 1967), 76-79. "The divine is not in some place alongside of the world or above the world, but is present in everything human and natural" (*ibid.*, p. 78).

thing if God is present, and another if he is present for you." (*That these Words of Christ, 'This Is My Body', etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics*, 1527, LW 37, 68). The words "for you" of course contain a strong evangelical hint. But we are reminded that the God of creation retains his divine freedom, that man is fallen and blind, and, to use the strong terms of Luther, "the world is seduced and obsessed by the devil" (WA 15, 630, 21). The situation is now so complex and grave that the sheer eternal wrath of God can here be experienced, at least for brief moments, and all creation can preach His anger (Cf. *Explanations to the Ninety-Five Theses* No. 15, LW 31, 129; also the terrors of the rustling leaf, LW 19, 76). Nothing in nature can come up against nature in this state, and the "natural powers" of man are themselves "corrupt in the extreme" (LW 12, 308). In fact here anything other than the theology of the cross will prove unavailing (*Heidelberg Disputation*, 1518, esp. theses 19-24; LW 31, 41), Calvary, not nature, constituting the only *visibilia* relevant for the essential saving vision of God. Australians would probably not be inclined to look for intimations of God in nature; their experience and attitude have not tended to interpret it as "holy"; on the contrary, as Veronica Brady writes (somewhat strongly): "Nature no longer seemed to speak of God but of the devil" (*A Crucible of Prophets, Australians and the Question of God*, Sydney: Theological Explorations, 1981, p 3), and D.H. Lawrence described their relationship to the land as "generally exploitative, a rape rather than a long-standing relationship of love" (*ibid.*, p. 64).

#### (b) *The tuning of macrocosm and man*

Though the world suffered irreparably in the Flood (antediluvian turnips were "better than melons, oranges or pomegranates were afterward") and continues to deteriorate day by day (it is in fact now full of "sermons" in the form of thorns and thistles, lice, bedbugs and flies to "remind us of our sin and God's wrath"),<sup>2</sup> Luther nevertheless maintains that sin cannot be attributed to the world, animals and nature. God, who remains sustainingly within and simultaneously beyond all, is constantly making creative gestures of love through all the universe. His sun rises and rain falls on the just and the unjust. He wills it so. Christians, Luther emphasises in his 1530 exposition of Psalm 111, therefore "exalt and thank God for all the works He has created, praising him as the only Creator and Master of everything in heaven and earth, not simply because He has created it but also because He has created it for our use and benefit." Explicitly the Reformer here involves himself in a consciously Christian exposition of the ancient Hebrew text and gives it memorably cosmic dimensions:

The sun and moon must shine for us day and night; the sky must give us rain, clouds, shade, and dew; the earth must give us all kinds of growing things and animals; the waters must give us fish and countless necessities; the air must supply birds as well as our breath; fire must warm us and give us countless benefits. And who can enumerate everything? It cannot be otherwise or better expressed than in these short words: "Great are the works of the Lord." And it cannot be sufficiently proclaimed to all eternity, even though the leaves and grass were all tongues. For who can praise or even comprehend this work alone, that He created our body and soul out of nothing and daily keeps us alive and pro-

2. Cf. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 58ff.

fects us against so many devils and so much danger to our life?" (LW 13, 366).

I would rather not spoil the picture, but sadly only a few righteous ones, *Luther* goes on to say, praise God for his great works. The others "are used to them and saturated with them, like an old house with smoke. They use them and root around in them like a hog in a bag of feed" (*ibid.*).

To that disorder we turn in a moment. Let us first keep our eyes on the divine good order and purpose created in the cosmos. All its parts and members are in alignment with it; they are to keep good things coming our way, cosmic, but manward. This motif is given sevenfold stress! All four elements and what is above and beneath them are pressed into service. The passage may well remind us of *Luther* explaining the First Article of the Creed in the *Small Catechism* ("... that god has made me and all creatures, ..."). This time it is not the rural scene of 16th century Saxony<sup>3</sup> but a Ptolemaic world view and Genesis 1 which are brought into play. Perhaps it is worth remarking at once that *Luther* (like the Old Testament) employs several 'landscapes' of creation/nature and that he can use such earthen vessels to express his confession and his call to doxology and thanksgiving. Nature, perceived as ordered by the reflective, ordering or creative mind of a period, people or class, cannot be one closed, final category but must be open to transformation and development, as "the history of nature" and the names Copernicus and Einstein may remind us.

In the above text God works for us, so do all the members in the 'chain of being'. And the highest goals are served by the humblest creatures, glistening foliage and transient grass calling forth our astonished praise not only that there is not nothing at all, but also for our own *creatio ex nihilo*, us 'whose sins are more than the leaves and the grass ...' (LW 46, 230).<sup>4</sup> This is no world of Platonic doldrums; the pulsating harmonies of divine purpose and human praise are to be produced amid the restless reality of our daily existence, where dwells the devil and where dangers loom. And yet—once more!—God, creation and nature are, rightly understood, all about us.

3. Cf. Albrecht Peters, *Der Mensch* (Handbuch Systematischer Theologie 8; Gutersloh: Mohn, 1979) 49.

4. *Luther* is explicit about our creation *ex nihilo* in *A Simple Way to Pray* (1535), in the explanation of the First Article there given:

You are God's creation, his handiwork, his workmanship. That is, of yourself and in yourself you are nothing, can do nothing, know nothing, are capable of nothing. What were you a thousand years ago? What were heaven and earth six thousand years ago? Nothing, just as that which will never be created is nothing. But what you are ... is God's creation ... Here is the soul's garden of pleasure, along whose paths we enjoy the works of God ... (LW 43, 210).

However, there may well be a deeper thought, an indication of God's very nature involved in this *nihil* expressed in the 1517 exposition of the *Penitential Psalms*: "Gottis natur ist, das er aus nicht etwas macht, darumb wer noch nit nichts ist, aus dem kan gott auch nichts machen ... Macht nit lebend, dann die toden." ("It is God's nature to make something from nothing, therefore he who is not yet nothing, of him God cannot make anything ... He makes alive none other than the dead"). (WA, 1, 183, 39-184, 4) Cf. also the 3 July 1545 statement: "... articulus de creatione rerum ex nihilo difficilior est creditu quam articulus de incarnatione", cited in Ebeling's *Dogmatik*, Vol. 1, 296. (Transl.: "The article of Creation from nothing is more difficult to believe than the article concerning the incarnation").

around us, concerned for (microcosmic) you and me.<sup>5</sup> If God is for us all creatures must be too.

Though the world deteriorates with the relentless progress of time, Luther can, it is the more interesting to note, also affirm a counter-movement reaching out and affecting his time from the final consummation: "We are now living in the dawn of the future life, for we are beginning to regain a knowledge of creation, a knowledge we had forfeited by the fall of Adam" (WATR 1. 573, 31. No. 1160).

**(c) Word and World not parted**

The vital communicative quality of Luther's writing on nature and his keen observation and use of its signs and parables are so well reflected in this morning's opening paper. A clue to this aspect of Luther may well be tied up with his predilection (as an expositor and teacher) for the *Old Testament* where the works of God in the world are retold, praised and reviewed so tellingly.

"He sends forth his Word and melts them" (the icy phenomena of a Northern winter), Psalm 147:18a. How deeply were medieval people in awe of tremendous natural but regular changes like those of the seasons? Luther's exposition of this verse gives the impression of a fusion of his own experience and that of the Psalmist in such a way that the overlap and interpenetration of the natural phenomena and the miracle of the Word is increased:

... when all is frozen hardest, the snow is deepest, and the ice thickest, at that very moment there is a turning point; the weather breaks and

5. In his *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943) E.M.W. Tillyard cites an ancient text which identifies a view of man and the world still highly influential in Elizabethan England. It may show how Luther too is plugged into a background tradition of cosmological thought whose ingredients are by no means exclusively biblical in origin: the Neo-Platonic revival of the Renaissance meant that humanists everywhere helped to disseminate and keep alive this pre-Copernican *Weltbild* (cf. Wilhelm Maurer, *Melancthon-Studien*, SVRG 70/181; Gutersloh: Mohn, 1964, 34-66). The passage, from Photius' *Life of Pythagoras*, is translated in Tillyard (p. 61) as follows:

Man is called a little world not because he is composed of the four elements (for so are all the beasts, even the meanest) but because he possesses all the faculties of the universe. For in the universe there are gods, the four elements, the dumb beasts, and the plants. Of all these man possesses the faculties: for he possesses the godlike faculty of reason; and the nature of the elements, which consists in nourishment, growth and reproduction.

In each of these faculties he is deficient; just as the competitor in the pentathlon, while possessing the faculty to exercise each part of it, is yet inferior to the athlete who specializes in one part only; so man though he possesses all the faculties is deficient in each. For we possess the faculty of reason less eminently than the gods; in the same way the elements are less abundant in us than in the elements themselves; our energies and desires are weaker than the beasts'; our powers of nurture and of growth are less than the plants'. Whence, being an amalgam of many and varied elements, we find our life difficult to order. For every other creature is guided by one principle; but we are pulled in different directions by our different faculties. For instance at one time we are drawn towards the better by the God-like element, at another time towards the worse by the domination of the bestial element, within us.

For our place and current situation in the world the judgement of Dr. Lewis Thomas, biologist and essayist, may need to be faced:

We are ignorant about how we work, about where we fit in, and most of all about the enormous, imponderable system of life in which we are embedded as working parts. We do not really understand nature, at all. [Cited in Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (London: Picador/Jonathan Cape, 1982) 73.]

there is a mighty thaw. Guess how this comes about? What causes it? There has been no fire or heat before the thaw, but only the sharpest cold. Nor did the sun cause it . . . the thawing can take place even when the sun is not visible in the sky . . . David says God changes it, and he shows with what he changes it: not with fire or heat but with His Word . . . These are sheer miracles of God." (LW 14, 129).

A prescientific view, certainly! If we knew only this aspect of Luther's God, we might think of his theology as poetry, statements whose relevance went out, however, as the gaps in scientific meteorological knowledge were closed. But the theology which here notes the uncanny, sudden and mighty energy transferences in nature is *as always* reminded of the power in the universe. God is the answer, but not simply because no other cause can be detected on the horizon; He is present (as the "unresting actor" in all his creatures; WA 18, 710, 38) whether reasonable causes are visible or not. And so Luther's total "experience" in fact can be brought in under the "roof" of the Word, and that includes his openness to wonder and to question the world round about him.

The non-divorce of the living God from his creation certainly underlies Luther's understanding of nature, a divorce which then took place in many minds of the 18th century and turned nature into something domestic if not static for the Enlightenment. The reaction this provoked (and the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 was a reminder to many) appeared with force in the Romantic revival: nature itself became divine, quite undomestic and potentially demonic. From beyond that watershed Luther remains to be heard or rediscovered.

In this good cause we might wrestle to formulate the question thus: If nature is as pulsating and alive with God as Luther suggests in so many places, can we know that His intentions toward us are finally positive? Is nature not His *mask*? Maybe its disharmony, deterioration and ultimate dissolution rather reveal the true reality.

How can Luther keep calling us to praise God for and in His works, when he is so well aware of "the hidden God"?

#### **(d) Creator and creature one in Christ**

Do nature (positively seen) and "the nature of God" chime in with each other? What of the darkness, and what of the anger and consuming fire?

The answer to the question is in Christ. Of his two natures Luther often speaks; not always is he simply repeating the dogma of Chalcedon when he titles Christ "God by nature". The Lord's divinity comes alive—at least it shows itself as such—in what he *does* today: "He is the Son of God or is God by nature (*natura Deus*). For no creature is able to give life, destroy death, and cure sin. Because Christ does this, then, and does it as the Father wills, commands, and gives it, it follows that He is God . . ." (On Psalm 2, 1538, WA 40/II, 269, 24-26; LW 12, 61). Here the heart of the matter, the connection hinted at even in that delightful quotation about the hatching eggs and the Word in Prof. Tokuzen's paper, becomes discernible. Recalling that in Christ, Creator and creature are one (WA, 37, 43; 39/II, 105, 6f. "there creator and creature is one and the same"), we grasp Luther's view of nature as participating in the mystery and hidden dynamics of the christocentric Word of God, "which like a mighty stream (*torrens*) cannot be checked by force"; it will "achieve what it is accustomed to do *by nature*, that is, save the



believers but condemn and shatter the godless" (WA 40/II, 275, 17f; LW 12, 65; my emphasis). Here we are, I think, therefore close to the nerve-centre of Luther's discourse *de natura*. Heinrich Bornkamm wrote: "God's nature is based on giving."<sup>6</sup> And the opening paper puts it in a luminous sentence: "The whole of creation as God's work gets light from God's salvation history" (p. 5). For those who have come over the threshold it works both ways, so that the statement of Luther's most recent English-writing biographer, H.S. Haile, arrived at via a discussion of Luther's stand in the eucharistic controversy, only adds light: "Through Christ, Luther's was a universe permeated with God."<sup>7</sup>

#### Sinful human nature—pure "materia" for God

How deeply God is in things in Luther's view, how His *creatio*-action is embedded, indeed, in the very biology of human procreation is also attested in the Reformer's decided preference for the traducianist position with respect to the genesis of each individual's soul (in contrast with most of the medievals, who held to a creationist line). God is quite capable of creating the *anima* (even if immortal) *ex corrupto semine*.<sup>8</sup>

Luther leaves no doubt that man is part of nature, that he is the problem in creation (Prof. Tokuzen in section 7), and that the corruption of human nature involves all aspects of man, also the divine gift of reason. As "curved in upon himself", man has lost the vision of his maker and is bound in "the evil infirmities of nature" (WA 1, 177, 17). The Socratic saying later quoted by J.G. Hamann is appropriate to the Adamitic situation: "Speak, so that I may see you!" And the response which Hamann creates refers to Christ, "This wish was fulfilled through the creation which is a speech to the creature through the creature."<sup>9</sup> It points to the incredible transformation which His descent to us has brought about. To the chagrin of all satanic powers (who may possess and torment a man but can never become "a personal human being"; *Hauspostille*, 1544, WA 52, 43, 8), because Jesus took on our very nature we can dare to say: "My flesh and blood is God and sits on high in majesty and rules heaven and earth" (*ibid.*, 52, 634, 1-2).

This vision, which seems to jump the shoal of time, depends completely on Christ, just as does the definition of man as "he who is justified by faith" (*Disputatio De Homine*, 1536, Thesis 32; LW 34, 139).<sup>10</sup> By comparison, and in view of the real havoc wrought by sin, philosophers' and Scholastics' definitions fail to provide for the creating action of the Word of promise along a teleological plane (*fieri*): man in all his parts here on earth is *pura materia* (Th. 35) for God's new creation, the required *nihil* whose "form" will be the "remade and perfected . . . image of God 38." No wonder that, with the whole creation involved, "all things will be seven times as lovely as they are now" (WA 34/II, 126; a few lines later: ". . . a thousand times more glorious . . .").

6. *Luther and the Old Testament*, 54.

7. *Luther, A Biography* (London: Sheldon, 1980), 129.

8. See Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien*, II, 2 (Tubingen: Mohr, 1982), 51f.

9. Quoted by Oswald Bayer, "Schöpfung als 'Rede an die Kreatur durch die Kreatur' ", *Evangelische Theologie* 1980, 320.

10. In this 'definition' the stone hits the water and from here the ripples spread out to protology as well as eschatology, as H.M. Barth wrote recently in a contribution on Luther's anthropology: 'Martin Luther disputiert über den Menschen,' *Kerygma und Dogma*, 1982, 160f.

### Before God—and not against nature

A critical question might emerge here: does this teleological line break Lutheran anthropology away from the necessity of discussion with scientific and other human knowledge about man (the "Humanwissenschaften")? The scope of the question could probably be broadened. Luther's positive appreciation of the world remains however. John Tonkin has in fact argued that Luther's "apocalypticism" has great secular significance, its function being "to deny any utopian vision of the world's destiny and any religious significance inherent in the secular order." This indeed "makes possible an acceptance of the world as a . . . secular reality with its own integrity. That is to say, the world is depopulated of its gods and demons and allowed to be a fully human sphere where nothing is ultimate, absolute or imperishable, where everything exists under the sign of finitude and eventual dissolution."<sup>11</sup>

Nature, says Luther, knows that there is a God and also that all good comes from Him (*Lectures on Jonah*, 1526, LW 19, 54f). This great truth is present, if hidden, in the idols, who live by the name of God; they are thus more than mere illusion. But who or what God is goes beyond reason and nature, it is "a great and rich and rare gift of the Holy Spirit" to know that God intends good "also to me" (*ibid.*). "To have a God" can mean no more than that a man has or wants, himself (cf. the *Large Catechism*, 1st Commandment), until by the proclamation of the true Redeemer God Himself takes possession of that realm, that hollow man.

Man's self-willed piety and his sinful abuse of the creatures<sup>12</sup> caused Luther's volcanic temperament to rumble and erupt repeatedly. In mild and moderate words these things are indicated toward the end of Professor Tokuzen's paper, words which are nevertheless genuine Luther, possibly happiest when preaching in his pulpit (whence come those expositions of the Sermon on the Mount). It is an admirable skill which thus allows the rugged Saxon Westerner to speak so softly and yet, as throughout the paper, to speak so well for himself.

Christians living from the forgiving Word of promise are good trees producing good fruit ("In nature being precedes operating", WA 40/I, 410). To be thus "simply a man" is their (new) nature which embodies a new awareness of the neighbour and the consciousness, amid the world's inequities and abuses, that simple living is a mandate "if others are simply to live". To transgress the Golden Rule is *contra naturam*, is to flout divine law, which has a close relation to reason ("the spring of justice", LW 45, 129) and which is to be moderated by love. This line, here roughly indicated, but visible in many of Luther's writings on the Christian in society, of course impinges on contemporary issues wherever we look. Chronic and acute sins in these areas drew Luther to express himself in ways scarcely less powerful than is the torrential moral indignation of Ezra Pound in his Canto 45 "With Usura"—and on similar subjects!

Usura slayeth the child in the womb  
It stayeth the young man's courting

11. "Luther's Interpretation of Secular Reality", *The Journal of Religious History*, Sydney, 6 (1970) 147.

12. "Creatura bona est, etsi in abusu sit. Oritur enim abusus non ex re, sed ex pravo animo" (WA 40/II, 203). (Transl.: "The creature is good, even when abused. The abuse arises not from the thing, but from the depraved mind").

It hath brought palsey to bed, lyeth  
Between the young bride and her bridegroom

#### CONTRA NATURA

They have brought whores for Eleusis  
Corpses are set to banquet  
at behest of usura.

Nature, human existence and ordered society are not simply confronted by forces of negation, evil and chaos; rather, as a result of the Fall, the latter are at work within realms of the former. Final deliverance in Christ will be clearcut in separating God's good creation from that which works for its destruction. In the meantime the God-given natural orders which Luther often mentions act as structures of preservation and guides to life on earth: family/marriage, state, church. Here the Christian is called to live righteously, lovingly, faithfully, for the good of the neighbour. "All things are free to you with God through faith; but with men you are the servant of everyman through love" (LW 28, 47; *Commentary on I Corinthians* 7, 1523).

# "The Significance of Luther's Thought on Nature in the Christian Witness in Asia Today"

## A Reaction to the Paper

Jose B. Fuliga\*

After carefully perusing over the essay Dr. Choong Chce Pang read before the Symposium participants, I cannot help but praise it for its excellence. However, no paper of this size can be as in-depth and comprehensive as one wants. The essayist himself admitted this when he wrote: "What have been briefly considered so far are only certain aspects of Luther's thought on nature. It is by no means an exhaustive study" (p. 7). There are concepts in Luther's writings which I had wished were incorporated and explicated in the paper. A paper which attempts to contextualize historical ideas to present time, culture and space is bound to fall short of its objective. This is especially true of the topic on nature, which was not prominent in Luther's theology.

My whole response to the essay can be capsulized into three short words: "Amen," "and," "but"—not necessarily in that order. There are many viewpoints in the paper with which I wholeheartedly agree and therefore say, "Amen." There are, however, "gaps" in the paper which I would like to fill in and therefore my response is: "and . . ." Furthermore, there are "missing links" which the essayist may have deliberately omitted and hence I react with a "but".

The writer asserts that it is Luther's conviction "that it is faith in God the Creator that determines man's understanding of himself, of his existence and salvation . . . [and that this] faith in God the Creator [is] the ultimately decisive truth." To this I say, "Amen and amen." I further agree with the author that for Luther the proper knowledge of God "can only come from the Word of God" (p. 2). This, certainly, is one of the main motifs in Luther's theology. In so short a page the writer did a fine exposition of this concept. We can go on saying "amen" to many viewpoints in the paper. However, there are other responses which this writer would like to present.

In view of Luther's emphasis on *lex et promissio*, we had eagerly anticipated an exposition of these concepts as these relate to the Asians' thoughts on nature. Luther saw nature in the light of Law and Gospel. Man and nature are inseparable in their past and future. Nature was subjected to the condemnation of the law because of man's sins. But nature will also be released from this bondage together with those who trust in God's *promissio*. While the essayist dealt with the matter concerning the bondage of nature due to man's sins and its final release from the bondage in the *eschaton*, the writer failed to bring into dialogue this bondage of nature with the Asian view of nature. I think there would have been a more significant contribution to the Christian witness in Asia if the writer had taken the further step of relating law and Gospel to the Asian concept of nature. Much of Asia is affected

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by this divine judgment on nature in the form of floods, hurricanes and earthquakes which affect the lives of many people on this continent. The first two forms of disaster happen every year in many parts of Asia.

We searched in vain for the animistic point of view on God and nature in the paper. We understand his predicament in view of his cultural and philosophical background. But I firmly believe that one dare not deal with Asian thinking on nature without touching on this aspect of Asian belief on nature, for it is widespread in Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, the Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea, among the natives of Australia and New Zealand and among the hill tribes of various countries in Asia. I am also disappointed to see that the Symposium did not deal at all with the Muslim view of nature when over 300,000,000 people in Asia are adherents of the Muslim faith. I had thought that the writer being a Malaysian citizen would have made even a small attempt to deal with the Muslim thoughts on nature and how Luther's thoughts on this subject can assist us in witnessing to this vast portion of humanity.

This writer sensed in Dr. Choong's paper a hesitance to call Luther's thoughts on nature a "natural theology." The Symposium has for its overall topic: "Nature and Natural Theology in Luther in the Asian Context." The essayist, I believe, deliberately dropped "natural theology" from the topic of his paper and he did so wisely. Luther, in a strict sense, did not have a "natural theology." It would be a labor in vain to extract and explicate a natural theology from Luther's writings. I think Luther would have said that to seek God in nature is to detach faith from the *promissio* and to trust in one's sight and experience. Such an attempt would be tinged with synergism and enthusiasm. Hebrews 11:1, however, says: "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." Luther rejected natural theology. He did right, for the Oxford English Dictionary defines natural theology as "a theology based on human reason apart from revelation." Luther would judge this procedure a theology of glory. While Luther did not have a "natural theology," he has a theology of nature. Luther could affirm the beauty of nature in the light of his understanding of God's promise. All of God's creation is good because its Creator is good. It is in good hands because it is in God's hands. Had Luther's view of God as an angry judge prevailed, Luther would have seen nature with different theological spectacles.

I had anticipated that Dr. Choong after inwardly digesting Luther's thoughts on nature would have come up with some program proposals on witnessing in Asia. Asia is a continent where nature and the natural in nature are both diminishing fast due to exploitation. In many lands in Asia the wealth of nature is owned by a few families and by foreign transnational corporations—a situation not completely unlike in Luther's days. As heirs of Luther's thoughts, what should be our witness in such a situation? Perhaps I am asking too much from Luther and from all the essayists in the 2nd Luther Studies Symposium. I am probably seeking for answers to questions which were not raised in Luther's days. Nevertheless, the concerns I have raised are realities in Asia to which we Lutherans can never keep our eyes closed.

REPORT ON THE SECOND LUTHER STUDIES SYMPOSIUMPreamble

The Symposium took place within the program of the Asia Program for Advancement of Training and Studies (APATS) of the Department of Church Cooperation of the Lutheran World Federation. It took place in the conference center of the Asian Institute of Technology with its splendid, first class convention facilities and accommodation.

At the conclusion of the First Luther Studies Symposium held in Hong Kong in December 1980, the Preparatory Committee met and considered a preliminary suggestion for the theme of the Second Luther Studies Symposium, to be held early in December 1982. Professor Y. Tokuzen of Japan suggested the theme: "Nature and the Natural in Luther's Thought" with special reference to the Asian context.

When the Preparatory Committee met in Bangkok in May 1981, the theme was adopted to read: "Luther's Thought on Nature and the Natural in Asian Contexts". Professor Tokuzen gave an outline of what he had in mind. He pointed out that classical Asian religions like Confucianism and Buddhism, and widespread ancestor worship in Asia, as well as animistic Asian religions are concerned with man and nature and man and his world. Hence such matters as man, nature, the social structures, man's place in nature, are modern Asian problems which the Christian message has to face.

Following up this line of thought, the committee decided to make the following concerns the objectives of the Second Luther Studies Symposium, Bangkok 1982:

- a) to contextualize Luther's theology according to traditional and modern Asian patterns of life and thought;
- b) to show this understanding in the ecumenical setting of Asia;
- c) to bring the above two objectives to bear on the mission of the Lutheran churches in Asia;
- d) to help churches and people to promote Luther studies at the local, grass root level;
- e) to equip churches and people for ministry, mission and ecumenism;
- f) to share this understanding with the Lutheran churches in other parts of the world.

In keeping with the theme and the above objectives, the committee decided on the following themes of lectures:

Lecture Ia: Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Classical Asian Religions (presented at this symposium by Dr. Arnold K.M. Yeung of the Chinese University, Hong Kong, with Dr. Andrew Chiu of Concordia Theological Seminary, Hong Kong, as reactor).

Lecture Ib: Nature and the Natural in Asian Thinking: Asian Animism and Primal Religion (presented by Dr. A.A. Sitompul of HKBP Ecumenical Office in Indonesia, with Dr. J. Tilak of Trinity College, Singapore, as reactor).

Lecture II: Nature and the Natural in Luther's Thought (prepared by Prof. Y. Tokuzen of Japan Lutheran Theological College, Tokyo, with Dr. M. Schild of Luther Seminary, Australia, as reactor).

Lecture III: The Significance of Luther's Thought on Nature in the Christian Witness in Asia Today (given by Dr. Choong Chee Pang of Trinity College, Singapore, with Dr. J. Fuliga, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines, as reactor).

The first two lectures gave the necessary introduction to the religious Asian context and its concern with man and nature and the natural. The third lecture brought Luther's thinking in confrontation with that context and the final lecture drew the necessary conclusions from this confrontation and showed the resulting implications for Lutheran ministry and mission in Asia today.

The group discussions, as also the plenary sessions, all concentrated on the material presented in the lectures and reactions, and throughout kept the theme of the symposium in mind as goal and purpose of thought and dialogue.

That a symposium of representatives of Lutheran churches from all parts of the world should concentrate on Luther's thought in relation to the theme, is to be expected. However, we should remember that Luther was a man of his historical and geographical context and he cannot and ought not to be pressed for answers to all our present Asian concerns. In many areas of concern his thinking is relevant and his basic theological principles are biblical and therefore sound. Where he cannot help us, we must be ready to proceed beyond him, on the basis of the Word of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The symposium realized that the question, how to present the whole gospel to the total man in Asia, had not been fully considered and that possibly it was beyond its capability to do so. It would have been useful to have had a Buddhist scholar give the symposium a presentation of the Buddhist conception of nature and the natural.

It should be noted that unfortunately Islam was not included in the considerations of the symposium.

### Recommendations

#### I. General:

1) Publication and dissemination of this Symposium's material.

a) a book for general information b) publication of journals, church papers, and in conferences at regional level c) dissemination at grass root level.

2) Next symposium.

Preparatory regional conferences on chosen theme plus copy of papers for local discussion.

#### II. Topics for next symposium

- 1) Responsible stewardship of nature, a special concern for ecological crisis, arms race, etc.
- 2) Christian social, political, economic responsibility in Asia (Luther: man as cooperator dei)
- 3) Spirit and spirits in relation to other spirits of our age and in Asian religions
- 4) Immortality of the soul, and the question of relationship of God and living human beings to the dead
- 5) Theology of culture for Asia
- 6) The question of pervasive animism and shamanism in all Asian societies
- 7) Christ and "the powers" based on Second Article of Creed

### III. Practical Matters

- 1) Short, popular biography of Luther in local languages is needed for 1983
- 2) Proceed with publication of Luther Key Words in Asian Context before material is published
- 3) Produce an Asian bulletin every 3 months as medium for exchange of theological information.
- 4) That churches in Asia be encouraged to show mutual concern.

### Concluding Final Report

Our symposium in Bangkok from 2-7 December 1982, has been for all of us an eminently exciting, rewarding and challenging experience. Once again the far flung APATS units in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Australia, were represented. In addition we were able to welcome to the symposium for the first time a representative from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan. Representatives from Europe (Prof. Dr. G. Seebass), from the USA (Dr. Faith Burgess), from Latin America (Dr. John Stumme), enabled us to share with Lutheran churches in other parts of the world our Asian concerns.

The benefit of their insight, help and experience and the resulting interchange of thought between representatives of the Lutheran world and ourselves, was of inestimable value to us all. The fellowship and mutual concern for one another which we have experienced in this way, has been a great encouragement for us. We hope that some of the findings of this symposium, as well as the high quality, the depth and sustained intensity of the plenary discussions, may not only show a lasting benefit for us in the Asian context, but beyond it help Lutheran churches in their witness in other parts of the world.



It was a matter of deep regret for us all that Dr. Manas Buthelezi, who had accepted representation for the continent of Africa, was not able to be with us. We greet him warmly and assure him of our continued love and prayerful concern.

The group reports are an excellent summary and reflection of the chief insights gained in the plenary discussions and clearly indicate the problems that face us as we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of Asian religions and present day problems. At the same time these reports show how helpful Luther and his thought can be as we develop a theology of nature that will serve our Christian witness in the Asian context. We who have come from the most diverse backgrounds have been deeply impressed by what we interpret in the Asian religions as the age-old quest for the God of the bible, the Creator, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the quest for an understanding of man's place in the world around him and of his responsibility and tasks in that world, and for release and rescue from the negative and destructive powers that fill him with fear and threaten to destroy him, which we know to be connected with the radical question of sin, central in man, and his crying need for complete salvation.

It must be noted that these group reports express the discussion and thought of each particular group and whilst they are complementary in many ways, they do not in every respect reflect the plenary thinking of this symposium.

The lectures and reactions, as also all our discussions, indeed the whole symposium have all shown how closely all of us, although often widely separated from one another by vast geographical distances, are bound together by our common Lutheran heritage, and through it, by our common understanding of God's Word and our common faith and hope, based on the gospel of Jesus Christ as our only Lord and Saviour and our confession of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This awareness of so much we have in common has been a source of joy and gratefulness for us all.

On the other hand we were not able fully to realize one of the objectives we had in mind, namely the sharing of our common understanding with others in an ecumenical Asian setting and the equipping of our churches and people for the ecumenical task. All the more, therefore,, we have appreciated the stimulating presence in our midst, throughout the symposium, of Dr. Arnold Yeung of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a member of the Church of Christ in China.

And we desire here to record our joy and thankfulness for their participation and presence in this symposium of the Norwegian and Finnish representatives of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, Rev. Jaakko Mäkelä and Rev. Christopher Woie. We sincerely hope that our presence in Bangkok and our attendance at the Sunday services in their four mission centers was as encouraging and strengthening for them in their difficult ministry, as it was an inspiration for us. We thank them for their ready help and patience in the preparation and conduct of this symposium and for their gracious assistance given to many of us individually. God bless them and make them a blessing for many.

The presence in our midst as guests of Rev. Gernot Fugmann of the Department of World Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria; and of Dr. Ingemar Oeberg of the Mission Academy in Stavanger, Norway, and their active and valuable contributions to our discussions widened the scope and deepened the thrust of our work and we thank them for being with us.

We ask the representatives of the APATS units to note that it is our earnest desire that the work and the findings of this symposium be communicated to the pastors and people of our Lutheran churches at the local and grass root level. It is here that the final purpose of our symposium should be realized. We therefore commend lectures, reactions, group and plenary discussions for study and discussion at as many levels as possible.

We recommend that the lectures, the reactions to them, and the reports be published and that the Asia Secretary of the DCC/LWF seek the necessary finance for this purpose.

In conclusion we desire to thank the LWF very warmly for making this symposium possible and for the new insights and challenges and help we have received for our work in our several countries. We thank Rev. S. Kishii and his secretary, Ms. Karin Kaukorat, for their efficient and untiring work during the past two years in the difficult task of assembling and preparing the symposium. And our thanks include the Preparatory Committee which gave time and thought to the implementation of the decisions of the previous symposium regarding our gathering together at Bangkok this time.

We ask all those present to extend our warm greetings to their churches and people.

Our thanks must include those who conducted our daily morning devotions and gave us spiritual direction for the work of the day.

Finally we thank those who acted as chairpersons during this symposium for so successfully guiding us through all the details of our plenary sessions and the work of the discussion groups. Those who acted as secretaries of the groups have merited our gratitude, as also Dr. S. Hebart, for noting the progress of the symposium and submitting this final report, its findings and recommendations.

#### Group Report I (Dr. F. Burgess)

- I. Group I began with the following as a working definition of the theme "nature and the natural":

"With nature and the natural is meant the whole web of existence and the existing of created beings in the world can be seen and understood visible and invisible in their particular statuses, roles and purposes as intended by the will of the creator for their fulfillment, both seen in the Christian understanding and in the secular classical/traditional/animistic religions".

Although the definition is quite general, to become more specific became almost impossible since we are dealing with so many different and differing religions.

II. Our discussion can be summed up in the following outline:

1. When we read the bible about creation, it is clear that the created world is not divine. In both the east and the west, however, there has been a tendency to divinize the world, although in different ways. The crucial question becomes "In what/whom do you put your trust?" For one places one's trust where one thinks one will achieve salvation. In both the east and the west there are elements of the knowable world in which people have tended trust. (We should fear, love and trust god).

2. Just as nothing in the creation is divine, nothing in the creation is evil. The creation is good. Evil comes into creation as a result of human sin. This includes not only wars and violence but also illness and death. The question here is "Of what are you afraid?" For there is actually nothing in creation that mankind should fear. If creation is good, however, this means that we cannot speak of an antagonistic dualism that involves the world. In no sense should one seek either to leave the world or to manipulate the world in order to find salvation. The question of "sin" and "salvation" along with the question of "incarnation" are critical not only in Christianity but also for the approach to the Asian traditional and primal religions. To translate the concept of "sin" into many Asian cultures is exceedingly difficult. On the other hand, although the concept of incarnation is known in some Asian cultures, what is important for Christianity is WHO is incarnated - the personal God who is incarnated at the particular point in history.

3. In Genesis we read that mankind has been given dominion over all the earth and has been told to be fruitful and multiply. Such fruitfulness and dominion must be seen as important in the context for which Genesis was written. There men and women were in danger of being overwhelmed by nature. Today's context means that there must be a new reading of dominion and fruitfulness (read Genesis 1:28 in the light of 1 Cor 10:23). Such a mandate today must include the preservation of creation. In the west, the concern for preservation of nature and ecology has at times taken on a potentially negative form. In the desire to preserve there may be the inclination of some kind of divinization of nature.

In the east, the preservation of creation must be seen in terms of the most responsible use, including technological use, of nature. Here questions of fruitfulness must also include questions such as the concern for overpopulation.

4. Paul speaks of a creation which must be liberated from its bondage or suffering. Christian freedom must always be seen in a twofold sense of our freedom in relation to other men and women, and also our freedom to care for creation. There is always the danger that freedom is seen in egocentric terms - how do I manipulate God or the spirits to achieve what I want - in short to try to be free from God. Christian freedom, however, is always freedom under God: freedom to witness to God; freedom to live responsibly with and for the neighbour; and now very clearly: freedom to live responsibly with and to care for creation.

5. We speak then of creation in Christ. We believe that creation as such has much to tell us.

a) First, we know of God's grace through the goodness of creation around. The flowers of the fields and the birds of the air preach to us of God's grace and mercy.

b) Second, creation calls on us to serve the neighbour. The very tools around us cry out for us to pick them up and use them in the service of our neighbour. Such tools are not only the tailor's needle, but also the engineer's technology.

c) We are then truly "cooperatores dei". Such cooperation includes both Christians and nonbelievers although the latter without their knowing it. In this way we Christians have the freedom to work with all mankind for the good of the world until Christ comes. God works through men and women to serve the needs of the neighbour. We see God's grace in the natural and hear the call to serve the neighbour. Such cooperation now must also include use and care of creation in the service of one's neighbour.

III. Following our discussion, we make the four recommendations:

1) We feel there must be adequate publication and grass roots follow-up to this symposium. This should include:

a) Publication of the lectures and reports of this meeting not only in the form of articles but also in book form within no more than one year. We continue to hope for the publication of the lectures and reports of the previous symposium.

b) Regional conferences in regional language about this particular topic.

c) Articles related to this Symposium in regional language in regional church journals.

2) We also feel that on the basis of this Asian symposium there should be studies in each of the nine regions on the question of what Christian responsible stewardship toward the creation means in each particular region. It is recognized that such studies must always attempt to preserve the tension between regional needs and global needs. We must try to think both in terms of Christian stewardship of regional resources and Christian stewardship of the earth.

3) We feel that a third symposium might be well served by having regional conferences first in which the topic could be discussed and studied on a regional level. Such regional reports or lectures based on reports would be basic material for the symposium.

4) As topics for the next symposium we would suggest either or both of the following:

a) The Spirit and the spirits. A discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in Christianity and how this relates to the understanding of spirit and the spirits in the primal and classical Asian religions.

b) The Christian and social responsibility in the Asian contexts. How the Christian relates responsibly to the social, economic and political world of Asia today.

### Group Report II (D. Susan)

#### 1. Nature and the Natural

Nature is the created world in its "God-relatedness"; the natural is man interacting with the created world in a positive way according to God's intention, e.g. in one's calling. In Asia, "nature" is usually a positive term: "if it is natural, it is good". In what sense may we say "nature is holy"? Answer: if we mean nature as created and used by God, i.e. if we reflect on nature in light of the living and personal God we know in Christ.

It is controversial to say "nature is holy in itself". The pantheism-panentheism distinction is important. We take the word "holy" to mean "related to God", and "sacred" to mean "God is here localized".

In animism, not God but rather spirits and souls are in nature. Spirits of the ancestors are also an important part of the present-day world. We and they are interdependent: I will get their blessing only if I act properly toward them; they will eat well only if I offer properly to them.

#### 2. Hidden and Revealed God

Primal religion struggles to find an immanent god but only can discover the deus absconditus. For Luther too, nature leads man only to deus absconditus. Primal religion too easily compartmentalizes transcendent and immanent gods - we Christians must insist on a paradoxical simul that is incarnational and Christocentric.

#### 3. Mythological and Historical God

A god of myth remains an impersonal "it" or concept, and history is cyclical; the God of history is personal with a will, and history is linear and teneological. I AM WHO I AM (Ex. 3:14) is active in history past, present and future: God of the patriarchs, God of present and of deliverance out of Egypt, God who "will be for you" as well. Mythology is an important part of Asian thinking. So down with "Entmythologisierung". We need the language of myth, symbol and metaphor since language itself fails adequately and wholly to express the reality of God. Incarnation is the key - God is there saying, "Here I am, in this man Jesus". Granted, even the Christmas gospel may look like just another myth, until we are grasped by all that is historical there: "Caesar Augustus Cyrenius etc." We need constantly to challenge the mythological with the "powerful, historical, linear gospel".

#### 4. Man between God and Satan

In Asia, abundant amulets, charms, superstitious and nameless anxieties bear witness to the reality of demons for Asia's people. (The West is more secularized, talking more of "evil systems" than "evil spirits", but even north Americans are fascinated by films like "The Exorcist").

Possession by evil spirits is real indeed and descriptive of reality (e.g. in Africa, a ritual at a man's second marriage to send away the spirit of his first wife). We must recognize the existence and power of evil spirits, but all the more effectively proclaim and contextualize the all-powerful God in Christ.

Also in regard to nature we must assert God's continuing preserving power against Satan, who is anti-God, anti-natural, destructive and chaotic. Often charismatic (neo-Pentecostal) Christianity succeeds in Asia because it demonstrates for people the power of Christ against the demons. We also need to show that power - without, however, putting God to the test, since he works in his own place and time and way and not to our order. Whereas the sectarians often emphasize "We possess the Holy Spirit", rather we ought to be saying "The Holy Spirit possesses us".

##### 5. Predestination, Fate, Freedom

We can accept one aspect of karma: the idea that "what one sows, one will reap". Nevertheless victimization of someone in this life by karma of a prior life is unacceptable. Karma is iron law by an impersonal God - "I am fated to get whatever comes". We must work for defatalization of life in Asia. The Confucian gentleman scholar, however, accepts neither fate, nor grace. "I am master of my life and should I make a mess of it, I should pay the price." Grace is beneath his dignity. How best can we proclaim the Gospel of Christ that freedom from the powers that bind us is not what we achieve for ourselves? We need to emphasize that freedom always carries the connotation of "belongingness to God". For us, predestination is closely tied to grace and is always a doctrine of comfort (so far on 12.2).

##### 6. Nature and Science

Japan is a case in point for Asian adaptation of western technology. Historically a culture-importer adding layer by layer from China and Korea, Japan has now imported technology from the West. Now this technology layer is the strongest, and for the first time, Japan has become an exporter. The West has always struggled and overcome nature; now Japan is using and handling nature. Now it will be interesting to compare how the two respond, for example, to the pollution problem (even though "polluted man" is the real problem).

"So underneath it all in Asia, there really is no distinction after all among man and God and things." The West is aggressive and expansionist vis-a-vis nature; in China, by contrast, the human being's duty is to see harmony with nature, because he or she is only a small part of it. The "great divorce" of man and nature in the West began in the 17th century and led by the 19th century to the complete objectivizing of nature and the closing of the knowledge gaps so that God became unnecessary to fill the gaps anymore. Already in Aristotle we see the beginning of this positivistic attitude to nature: "What is truth? We must discover it". This contrasts with *maya* in the East; not just that "all is illusion" but "I must not temper with nature or disturb nature". Man must, however, consider himself/herself both as part of nature and above it.

## 7. Nature, Creation, Redemption and Eschatology

Our concern in the Christian message is not only for nature as such, but also nature in the context of salvation. Particularly in the Old Testament creation is linked with salvation and eschatology, e.g. 2. Isaiah: "The God who made heaven and earth will save us and the earth will be renewed." The New Testament seems to have lost this hope for the earth, although we are told that in Christ the world to come will be a complete transformation of this one. Is this a dynamic transformation? Like the Christian, is the earth also being renewed every day? What is the value for us of the physical world, given the real possibility of a nuclear holocaust?

Luther's eschatology may be viewed under the categories of creation, justification and church. (c.f. Asheim's book). Most importantly, the entering into history by the living God in Christ has linked creation, salvation (through the cross and resurrection) and eschatology for us. We must be careful however not to speculate too much about the (unknowable) future life, or imagine that we can achieve heaven on earth, for that is theologia gloriae. So we must distinguish carefully between materialism and the biblical view that the "new heaven and new earth" can take place here. We must also mention that justification and reconciliation of man is always primary for Luther.

## 8. Natural Theology and Contextualization

Nature can bear witness to God (Rom 1:20) only after the Word of God comes to us. In itself nature remains a closed book insofar as deus revelatus is concerned. Primal religion assumes some cause for nature, but does not know a personal god. "I suspect that 'natural theology' is a western concept."

In Luther's view, God preserves the fallen world through the structures of creation, e.g. marriage, family, government, work, etc. Observing these produces civil righteousness and allows the gospel to be preached.

Are not such structures of creation legitimate also in other cultures prior to the Gospel, i.e., "not everything is bad" in the traditional culture. Such structure can be both demand and gift. Language structures (e.g. terms) must be both used and surpassed in proclaiming Christ ("broken categories"), just as in the New Testament we see Jesus proclaimed as Messiah but also more than the Jewish understanding of Messiah. Perhaps there is room also for Christian qualified use of some older rituals in some cultures, purged of salvific meaning and with constant explanation and correction through the office of preaching. (so far 12.3).

## Group Report III (Rev. J. Stumme)

In discussing the theme "Luther's Thought on Nature and the Natural in the Asian Context" we were aware of our mission responsibility to proclaim the gospel about Jesus Christ and to express the love of God for all in all of life. We asked ourselves: What can we do here in this symposium to serve our churches? What is necessary to develop a Lutheran theology in and for Asia? How might the Gospel more convincingly and powerfully penetrate the daily lives of the Christians in our churches?

As Lutherans in Asia, we believe we are challenged to proclaim in word and deed the universal gospel of free grace in our own situation. In so doing, we need to avoid both an approach that would obscure or distort the gospel as well as one that would fail to take into account the historical, cultural, social and political contexts of Asian peoples. Our call is to seek a church life and an evangelical theology critically related to the living traditions and genuine concerns of our people. Our commitment is to a more profound comprehension of the gospel and of Asian reality. Our concern is the way in which ordinary people experience their reality and how the gospel might take faithful form in their experience so that people might grasp God's love for them. We find in Paul's words in 1 Cor 9 a model for us that includes both firmness - "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (v.16) - and openness. "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible" (v. 19).

We are grateful for the stimulating lectures by Dr. Yeung and Dr. Sitompul on the theme of nature and the natural in the classical and primal religions of Asia. We encourage our churches to study these lectures (as well as the responses to them, by Dr. Chiu and Dr. Tilak) both for their knowledgable content as well as their methodology, that can be used for further study.

It is important that Christians have an accurate understanding of Asian religions based on respect. We emphasized that we should avoid rushed and oversimplified readings of these religions and be careful in our judgment about them. Our understanding, however, should be critical so that ideas and practices foreign to the biblical view are excluded and the newness of the gospel is announced.

In discussing nature and the natural from a theological perspective, we recognized the importance and the richness of the first article of the creed, the doctrine of creation. The lectures by Prof. Tokuzen and Dr. Choong and the responses by Drs. Schild and Fuliga helped us to see the contribution of Luther to our theme. We believe that there are resources in his thought that can aid the churches in the development of a "theology of nature" for the Asian contexts, in the encounter of Christian faith with the Asian primal and classical religions and in the praxis of Christians in the midst of, for example, the ecological crisis. We recommend that the churches study these lectures, as a stimulus for further study of Luther on the topic.

Among the many ideas expressed in our discussion, we mention the following ones as samples of our conversation:

1. In Luther, God is known by people of other faiths as the creator who gives blessings. But this knowledge is limited (for example, one does not know that God creates out of nothing and by his Word) and distorted (one has to do something to gain the favour of God). Only in Christ, does one know the free grace of God.
2. The biblical account of creation arises out of Israel's experience of salvation. In contrast to other religions whose accounts of creation are speculations on the origin of the world, the bible's aim is to affirm that the God who saves is the same God who has created and sustains the whole world. II Isaiah, for example, expresses this close



connection between salvation and creation. Christians should emphasize the unity of creation, redemption and new creation. Shalom, peace, justice and wholeness is the goal of the whole creation. This wholistic interpretation of God's action for his world is especially important in situations of oppression and in situations where peoples' future is threatened.

3. The doctrine of creation means that God has given human beings - Christians and others - something to do. We are responsible to take care of the world that God has given us. We can even speak of human beings as active partners with God, and we can affirm the idea of continual creation. God's commandments - often discovered in the common experience of humankind - go together with creation, instructing us how to care for the world. In believing that God is creator of all and works in all, we see that we cannot separate life or any part of life from our faith. Rather God is to be served by all in all of life, as Luther's understanding of vocation states so clearly. The doctrine of creation gives us the basis for a wholistic understanding of Christian responsibility, in and for nature and history.

4. The creator God of the bible is a universal God and not a god of a clan, as is so often true in primal religions. Our mission is based on faith in the One who is God of all people. This creator God is also a suffering God who has given us the new creation in Jesus Christ.

5. We especially appreciated Prof. Tokuzen's comments on "every thing is preacher". Nature is not God but God is present in nature and all of God's creatures can speak to us and witness to God's love. God uses this means of this world to come to us, as we recognize the baptism and the Lord's Supper. Those who participate in the community created by the Spirit in word and sacrament need to learn to appreciate God's presence in nature. In a time when our natural environment is threatened, we need a responsible attitude toward all of nature where every thing is a preacher.

6. We recognize with anguish the needless destruction of nature and human life in the world today. The realities of pollution and resource depletion, of war and the arms race, of hunger and oppression, etc. threaten the future not only of Asia but of the whole world. These realities contradict God's will for his creation. We know that the source of these evils lies with that part of nature which is the human being, who refuses to live in faith in God and in love toward his neighbour. As Christians we confess our complicity in this destruction, and we ask God for his forgiveness and his renovating presence among us. We urge our churches to assume their responsibility in the midst of these questions, and to denounce that which is against the will of God. As those who live by a vision of a new creation of justice and peace, we are called upon to speak our prophetic word in the concreteness of our situation and to join with others to work for greater justice and peace.

#### Recommendations of Group III

1. Please make available materials of first and second symposia as soon as possible.

Also the preparatory material of the first symposium should be made available.

2. In preparation for Luther's anniversary: include biographical material in short popular style for translating into local languages.

3. It is recommended to proceed with the publication of an Asian Lutheran dictionary before whole material is published.

4. Produce a bulletin, e.g. every three months, as exchange of theological information etc. in the area.

5. Special study should be given to concrete issues growing out of this symposium focusing on stewardship and responsibility (ecological crisis, arms race, etc.).

6. That the churches in the area be encouraged to show mutual concern.

7. Some members felt that, in continuation from this meeting, the Second Article of the Creed should be brought into central focus. A suggested theme was: Christ and "the powers".

It was also requested that preparatory papers should be forwarded at an early stage to give opportunity for discussion in local contexts even before the symposium.

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III

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN ASIA

Report of the Third Luther Studies  
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Advancement of Training and Studies)

## SPIRIT AND SPIRITS IN ANIMISTIC RELIGIONS

by Dr. José Fuliga (Philippines)

This study is limited to some cultures within South East Asia. This limitation is dictated by several cogent reasons: (1) The animistic societies in Asia are so numerous and diverse, (2) The geographical umbrella covering Asia extends from New Zealand to the Middle East, (3) The writer's competence progressively decreases as he moves away from his racial and cultural milieu, and (4) With the limitation of time and literary resources the task of being comprehensive becomes impossible.

Animistic beliefs and practices can be found among primitive tribes in all continents and among adherents of the major faiths. There are even animists in non-animistic societies. These are people who believe in spirits, devils, poltergeists, trolls, leprechauns, and gremlins but this does not have the patronage of the society and their total life is hardly influenced by their belief in myriads of spirits.<1>

What is animism? It is derived from the Latin word anima which primarily means "breath", and secondarily, "soul". <2> In the 19th century scholars referred the term to the belief that natural objects were animated by a soul or spirit. Thus, it has been otherwise called Nature Worship or Spiritism.<3> While some do not make a distinction between animism and animatism, <4> others clearly distinguished the two. Animism is said to be the belief of "personalized spirits which are separable from the objects with which they are associated." <5> Animatism, on the other hand, is said to "emphasize impersonal spiritual force which is not separable from the object with which it is associated." <6> Still others make the distinction on the basis of the spirits or spiritual forces' abode.

Most animistic societies assume the existence of a singular, supreme being.

### I. The Wholly And Holy Other Of The Animists

The belief in one Supreme Being is held by various tribes in South East Asia. The Malays call him Batara; The Dayaks Mahatara; the people of Serawak Betara; the Olongadju of Borneo Hataiia; the Javanese Dewata or Djawata and the Toradja of Celebes Jlai.<8> The Ami of Taiwan call him Maladau.<9> The Bataks call him Mulajadi na Bolon <10> although other names are given to the Supreme Being. One, however, is not quite sure if the Bataks believe in one God with various names, or in a number of supreme beings. The Tagalog Filipinos call him Bathala while the Visayans call him Laon.<11> Various tribal groups in the Philippines, as is true elsewhere in South East Asia, have different names for the singular supreme god.<12>

In many cases this Supreme Being is regarded as the God who created the world.<13> He is a good God and hence is called Debata Hasi-Asi (Merciful God).<14> This God is omnipotent, all-seeing and greater than all the deities. He is a gracious God, omnipresent and is a righteous Judge.<15> The dwelling place of this God is in the highest place - in the heavens.<16> In some tribal groups in the Philippines the Supreme Being is believed to abide in the highest mountain. It is believed that God was

once upon a time among men but sin made God move away into the farthest heaven.<17> Since then this God became a remote, inaccessible God. His relationship with the earth and with human beings was something that was only in the beginning. But since then he has not participated in human history.<18> Shortly after creation God has left the world. He has resigned his government of the world.<19> Although people have names for this God, yet they hardly know him. In fact, his names appear only occasionally in myths and legends. If people ever have stories about him, these are stories which happened in the very remote past. He is spoken of like a punctiliar sorist. He played no role in the history of man save in the beginning of the creation and the Fall. He has no part in the present history of man. And there is nothing said about the future activity of this God. There is not much description about this Supreme Being except the descriptive names attributed to him. He is unlike the God of the bible who is known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; who shaped the historical development of the nation of Israel. He appeared among His people. He spoke with His people, gave them commandments, called prophets and appeared in visions. There is no divine revelation in animistic religions! In some animistic cultures the creator-god has become an impersonal being and "has nothing to do with the morality of his creature."<20> In some animistic tribes there is not even a trace of a belief in a supreme being.<21> Among those which have a belief in a supreme being very few have the practice of erecting temples of worship for him. The natives of the Northern part of Luzon believe in a supreme being whom they call Kabunyan. But Kabunyan is a Deus Absconditus. Not too much is known about him.

...He receives no sacrifices, and is not invoked, addressed or invited in any way during sacrificial worship...Among the Kalingas, Cabunian is a proper name but the sad thing is, no prayers are ever directed to him among the people...<22>

For many animistic communities the supreme god exists. He is there. But he is not here. This high god has no dealings at all with the peoples of the earth and their activities. He has become a silent, unconcerned spectator to the whole of creation. And the peoples have further pushed this god into obscurity by assigning him to a place so high he is beyond approach. God has been exalted far beyond the reach of man so that he has become an unknown god. Thus there are no representative images of this high god among animistic cultures. There are no symbols which would help people describe such a god. Of the five gods among the Bataks

"there are neither pictures nor symbols. They are worshiped neither in temples nor in holy places. They do not even traffic with men through media. Men have little to do with them, and their names are only met with in myths and prayers.<25>

Although the high god is presumed to be benevolent, his indifference to the welfare of his creature made man conclude that he is "an old weak grandfather."<26>

According to one tradition Batara Guru was called down to men once but declared the problems of the middle world were too difficult and that in the future he should be left in peace.<27>

God is said to have no power to restrain the mischief of the spirits and therefore he is not asked to intercede for men against the spirits.<28>

## II. The Spirit World Of The Animists

The absence of God from his creation has been replaced by the presence of innumerable spirits. So countless are the spirits so that even though they are not omnipresent, one feels they are because they fill everything. So for the animist his world is never purely material and secular. It is filled with spirits. The animist can readily accept what the unclean spirit said in the Gospel of Mark, "My name is Legion; for we are many" (5:7 RSV). Everyone and everything have spirits - the lakes, the rivers, the sea, the forest, the mountains, the trees, the plants, the animals, the birds and people. And even though the material and physical things of this world pass away, the spirits live on. Roy Franklin Barton attempted to count the number of spirits among the Ifugaos, a tribe in the Northern part of the Philippines. He wrote:

About 1912 when I had listed daily about two hundred deities, I estimated that there were about 1,000 of them because listening in on invocations it seemed to me that about four were mentioned to one that I had listed. Later I raised the estimate to 1200. In this work I have listed 1240 - with at least seven classes of deities yet to be listed.<29>

The animists have not quite defined what are spirits. Perhaps due to the incalculable number of spirits it becomes an impossible task to categorize and define each class of spirit. The animists have no oral or written confession of faith. They have not developed an apology and a systematic and critical analysis of their belief system. They accept it as tradition. Their faith is not born out of conviction but out of social pressure and fear. But their belief system provides the animists with a mode of existence which help them in their relationship with nature and with their fellow human beings.

Spirits are believed to be personalized non-human beings. But they are "thought to live like men with their wives and children, slaves and cattle, playing, waging war and arguing among themselves."<30> The spirits have feelings.<31> Many spirits have names. Those with names are usually considered gods. They are more powerful and have a wider domain.

Most spirits and ghosts in Thailand have names, but the local spirits never. Even though a Thai may have a most intimate relationship with the spirit of the land he owns, he does not give him a personal name.<33>

The probable reason why the Thais do not give the local spirits names is that there are too many of these and it is impossible to provide all of them with names or to remember their names if each is provided with one.

Spirits may have human or non-human origin.<34> They possessed superhuman powers of intellect and will. The tribal spirits are eternal but not the spirits of individual ancestors. The Thais, for example, consider their spirits to be immortal because they have been in the land before the Thais came.<35> The spirits are said to be invisible beings. However, on many occasions they can be seen with a body. The jinns of the Moslems of the Middle East are supernatural beings that can take human or animal form.<36> In fact, even though the souls are incorporeal they can be hurt.

They seem sensible to shot and stab...Thorns of the wild citron are affixed to the house stairs, and a trough full of water is placed before them, that the spirits may be wounded or frightened, for they are afraid of water.<37>

Among the Visayans the tree spirits look like Americans. The female spir-



its are unusually beautiful. "They use lovely perfume. The men, too, are always handsome." <38> Some spirits are giants and swallow heavenly bodies at such time as when there is an eclipse. <39> The spirits are unpredictable and gullible. They live on whims rather than on predictable, constant desires. It is for this reason that the animists are never sure if they will gain either the cooperation or ire of the spirits. <40> Even that animating power within man which the Bataks call tondi has fickle whims. <41> The spirits also have their own ranks and status. "The souls of the dead retain their earthly status when they arrive in the afterworld." <42>

There are three kinds of spirits: the good, the evil, and those which can be both. The good spirits are those which bring to men good fortune. <43> Some say that the good spirits come from good men. Among the Batak Toba

the spirits of the people who died with great honor, who had many descendants or come from a well-to-do family is a good one, and called by his descendants as sibasas besar meaning the great doctor. According to their belief, the spirit of this man could give them mercy, blessing and wealth. Descendants of this spirit pay homage by giving periodic offerings. <44>

The spirits of the dead are usually good to the living members of their families or clan. They are thus invoked for health, protection and aid and in times of war and planting. Evil spirits bring all sorts of evil and death. They are invoked so that they may not bring harm to the living. Some say that evil spirits come from evil men.

Among the Batak Toba spirits which come from strange places are dangerous. These begu-jau can make people die suddenly or create disasters. Other spirits become evil because the bodies from which they came from were laid in coffins which were not measured before burial. Such is the case of the begu-nurnur. Begu-Ladang or Begu-Sharshar is the spirit of the dead who died without any descendant; whose status in society according to traditional law is very low. <45> But the distinction why some are good and others evil are not quite clear. In many societies there are no reasons given. And many spirits can be both good and evil and no one can ever be sure when they can be good or evil. Most spirits are considered malignant. For this reasons they are feared. A spirit is good because it has been pleased with sacrifices or offerings. Even the spirit of a person is not always looked upon as good. It can be tempted to leave the body and that person can get sick or die. An offering must be made for one's soul. <46>

There are no angels in animistic religions, that is, personalities which are confirmed to be always good.

In a syncretistic society like the Philippines where Christian and animistic beliefs are commingled, some have provided a pseudoChristian explanation for the existence of evil spirits. They claim that after the rebellion and defeat of the bad angels, these were driven out of heaven. Not all of them ended up in hell. Many of them landed on trees, on earth, on the sea, in forest clearings, on the grass, in rivers, etc. Among these spirits the spirits in the trees became the most powerful because Christ gave them this power when they took pity on Christ on the cross and covered His nakedness during the crucifixion. In gratefulness for this kindness, Christ gave them more power but they now use this power for evil - to harm men. <47> Even some Protestants hold on to this view.

Among the Warays of Eastern Visayas, Philippines, evil spirits can make

men's spirits evil. They befriend mostly girls and those befriended lose their vigor and health. They suffer seizure and when their bodies remain stiff this is a sign that their spirits have left the bodies. Their spirits are taken by the evil tree spirits in their homes. They are invited to partake of the sumptuous meal. Those who do become evil spirits, their bodies die.<48>

Evil spirits can do many malevolent things. They can make accidents happen to people who travel in their domain. They can make people sick who violate rules and taboos. When displeased a spirit (the Begu-Siherut) can make someone's body thinner and thinner until he dies. Another spirit (the Begu-antuk) kills people by striking their heads.<49> Even though the Batak Confession repudiates these beliefs one suspects that the beliefs continue to live on even among Christians. This suspicion is supported by the fact that Christians continue to consult the datus who could contact gods, spirit or sombaon.<50>

In animistic societies the living always feels dependent on the spirits of the dead. The spirits are feared because they are believed to be powerful. They can go where they want to bring either blessing or harm to the living. The spirits of the dead can return to earth and drag the living to the kingdom of the dead. They do this even with relatives.<51> Among the animists there is a greater fear of the dead than of the living. The living you can see. The spirits one cannot see. The spirits are sometimes unmerciful and unforgiving. When they accept offerings from the living through their medium, they often do not care about the economic status of the living. As one cannot and does not haggle with the spirits about what fair offerings ought to be sacrificed, the living in fear goes to the extent of becoming indebted to satisfy the spirits. And as one proverb says, "It is better to be in debt to men than to the spirits." When offerings are therefore given to the spirits, this is not out of filial love but a desire to be left in peace. This fear of the spirits is so great that nonbelievers in an animistic community are forced to participate in the ritual ceremonies of the spirits. In Northern Thailand it is believed that non-conformists bring the wrath of the spirits on the whole village. Therefore, non-conformity is difficult. One finds the family and the whole village bearing pressure on the non-conformists. "Economic sanctions are imposed upon the uncooperative person. Nor rice, meat, or vegetables are sold to him by the other villagers."<52> In the Philippines there are behavioral manifestations to show the people's fear of spirits. In the rural areas, even though no one is in sight one shouts, "Please step aside" before one throws anything out of the window at night. There is fear that the person might hit a spirit who may then take revenge on him. Before he cuts down a tree, especially a banyan tree which is believed to be the spirits' favorite dwelling place, he first asks permission from the spirit. Gifts of food are offered to the spirits of a field before a farmer starts clearing or planting it.<53>

The whole life cycle and all human activities are influenced by this belief and fear of spirits. The whole of life is plagued by the spirits' possible disruptive presence.<54> "They reside in the forest where they stalk victims, wander under the houses, ravage gardens, search out human weaknesses and assist sorcerers."<55> The spirit could influence the weather and the harvest.<56> For the rural Filipinos

his spirits are often inseparable from planting and harvesting. Ceremonies (for the spirits) are integral to agriculture, fishing, hunting as well as to everyday life.<57>

Even plants can get sick because the spirits are angry. In the province of Leyte, Philippines, there is a process of curing "sick" rice.

The tambalan (shaman) prepares a good meal and offers it, with the proper apology, to the spirit. He also apologizes for the souls of the former landowners and asks forgiveness for his having neglected them.<58>

Another method of curing the rice is the use of some kind of incense with a prayer to St. Isidore, the patron saint of farmers.<59> Here the syncretism of animism and Roman Catholicism is evident. The Dayaks of Borneo also believe that rice has its own spirit which they call samangat padi. "They hold feasts to retain this soul securely lest the crop should decay."<60> For many rural Filipinos the fields and forests are filled with spirits which must be treated with respect and friendliness lest they bring harm. The sea also is the home of many spirits. There are spirits of the sea and the deep sea. The spirits govern the movement of the fish. If the spirits are angry the fishermen will have a poor catch. If a fisherman is befriended by a spirit of the sea he will have rich harvests and many other fishermen will want to join his fishing expeditions. But to secure the friendship of the spirit there is a need to provide the spirits with a meal. This ritual is called buhat.<61>

The Thais believe that the owners of the land are the spirits.

It can be said that man holds and uses the land on lease from the original spirit owner. The name for them, 'lord (or owner) or the place' suggests that they are first of all 'owners' and only then rulers or guardians. In fact, according to Thai thought, we can say that man borrows the very ground he walks on. The world was not ours from the beginning.

Among the Bataks Solobaon is considered the owner of Toba Lake. Offerings must be given to this spirit so that one will be safe while sailing it. "All places in the Batakland have their own kind of sombaon or spirits."<63> Spirits do not have a spiritual life and world. Their world is a material world. Food and property are the substance of their happiness and well being.

Spirits live everywhere. They can even be on bits of dead wood floating in creeks.<64> But there are particular places which are considered abode of the spirits. In the Middle East the spirits may be seen inside a mosque for it is believed that they love to study the Koran.<65> "In some of the Javanese mosques, one can find a special place where offerings for the spirits may be made."<66> Trees, especially the balete (banyan) are considered the favorite dwelling of the spirits and thus become objects of veneration and worship.<67> Many Buddhists in Burma believe in countless spirits called nats. The people build small shrines for the nats.

Many villages provide special places for nat-worship, and even in some of the Buddhist temples one may make offerings to the spirits.<68>

The Papuans carve figures to become habitations of the spirits of their forefathers. These carved figures or images "are set amid the worshipping multitude at sacrificial feasts, and food placed in their arms."<69> Some Filipinos even believe that there are spirits which live in palatial homes in big cities with smooth, wide, white roads and drive expensive limousines.<70>

Among the animists the spirits of their dead never depart to be completely detached from the relationship with the living. They are still part of the clan or communities to which they formerly belonged when alive. They have not really "departed." <71> This belief concerning the spirits of the dead is true among many Filipinos.

Among the Sulods of Panay...the departed souls take interest in their living kinsmen so that there is a continuous relationship between the living and the dead. The same phenomenon is reported among the Ilocanos. Communion with the dead is manifested in the food-offering (atang for the Ilocanos) for them. The same belief is reflected when Tagalogs have picnics at the cemetery during All Souls' Day. A report from Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao reads: 'Every All Souls' Day, almost all the families in our barrio offer food at the altar...! The feast during death anniversaries or during novenas for the dead reflect the same belief that the departed share the food of the living...The departed ancestors are thought to act as intermediaries or intercessors before God...The departed still belong to the sakop (clan) which does not dissolve at death. The sakop extends horizontally among the living and vertically from the dead to the unborn. To use a theological term, this form of veneration is the Filipino version of the 'Communion of Saints.' <72>

It does seem that in an animistic culture death does not bring an end to kinship ties. Once a relative always a relative. And relatives are bound to reciprocate each other even after death. The dead are expected to bless the living; to provide them with wealth and descendants; to protect them from harm, sickness and failure of crops. On the other hand, the status of the dead is dependent on the behaviour and status of the living. Their wellbeing depends on the social and economic condition of the living and the honor these give to them. The dead provide blessings to the living so they can extract a fair good offerings from them. It threatens harm in order to elicit sacrifices. The living provide the offerings to get the blessings of the dead and prevent their threat to their lives. <73> There is therefore a relationship of mutual dependence between the living and the dead. There is a reciprocity between the dead and the living. "The position of the dead is dependent on the fortune and conduct of their descendants." <74> The spirits of the dead are present in the festivities of their living relatives. The vices, passions, and sufferings of the living also affect the spirits of the dead. <75> Among the rural Filipinos the fishermen expect a big catch on All Souls' Day because they believe their deceased relatives and friends will help them. But the souls of the dead in return expect a good meal. <76> The Bataks honor their dead not only with food offerings but also by erecting beautiful and expensive monuments or tombs called tugu. <77> This interdependence between the living and the dead is so important for the animist that he fears dying without descendants for that would mean that no one will feel bound to serve and honor him after death. <78> Therefore children are considered a fortune. Should the memory of a dead ancestor be forgotten for lack of any descendant, he would cease to exist. <79> In Philippine society the dead is eventually forgotten after one or two generations.

One way of preventing the ire of the spirits is by providing them with offerings. Among the Filipinos the kind of food and drinks given to the spirits are usually those which are the favorites of the departed. The sacrifices and offerings must be the best. These are usually prescribed

by the medium. Of course, these are usually those which are available in the area. A white rooster or a white pig are considered good offerings. The animists, of course, do not expect the spirits to consume the material sacrifices which are offered. However, they believe that the soul stuff and the scent of the favorite menu are sufficient.<80> In the Philippines the food prepared for the spirits is usually saltless. Offerings of food are done on various occasions. They are given when a person gets sick, after a person is healed, before clearing a field, before planting, during the growth of the plants to insure good plants and yields, and before and after harvest and in many other times and situations in life. Blood seems to be the substance in many rituals for the spirits. In some parts of the Philippines there is a ritual called padaga which is the spilling of pig's blood on a lot where a new house is to be constructed in order to acknowledge the rights of the spirits and placate their anger.<81>

Carpenters are said to make an offering to the spirits the night before the construction of a house that their tools may not offend the spirits...And on inaugurating the new house animal blood is rubbed at the posts inside the house for it is said that the souls are afraid of the blood of animals.<82>

Among the Thai of Northern Thailand it is also believed that blood satisfies the spirits but not just any kind of blood. It must be either chicken or pig but not dog's blood.<83> The Bataks sometimes deceive the spirits by sacrificing an egg and declaring it to be a white buffalo.<84> The past practice of cannibalism among the Bataks was due to their belief that this is one way of making one's tondi strong. "The human parts potent with tondi are the blood, heart, palms of hands, or soles of feet."<85>

There are other ways of warding off the spirits' power over men besides appeasing them with food offerings. These can be done by exorcism, dances, prayers, and use of symbols. Among the Bataks there is a dance to pay homage to the spirit of their ancestors.<86> Among Christians house blessing is meant either as a preventive measure against evil spirits or as a form of exorcism. Among the Filipino Catholics palms are fashioned usually in the form of a cross on Palm Sundays and after being blessed by a priest are hung or placed near the doorways to ward off evil spirits. Other objects used for this purpose are the cross or crucifix, the images or statues of the saints and holy water. Other things which repulse spirits are garlic, herbs, gunfire, iron and salt.<87> In rural towns when epidemic occurs the image or statue of the town's patron saint is paraded through the streets of the town and the patron saint's help is invoked against the evil spirit which brought the epidemic.

Prayers and incantations are also to drive away the spirits. In the Middle East the jinns (in Moslem legend a supernatural being that can take human or animal form and influence human affairs) can be made to flee by reciting the phrase: "In the name of Allah, the merciful and compassionate."<88> In many communities in the Philippines amulets and "Latin prayers" are conjoined to prevent the evil spirits' power becoming effective. One such amulet is the "sacred oil" concocted by the medicine man from selected roots gathered from caves on Holy Friday.<89> Another ritual to drive away the evil spirits is to recite the genealogy of Jesus in Latin. Sometimes the genealogy of Jacob and Esau is recited to "prove to the spirits that they and human beings are brothers with a common father in Abraham."<90> Among certain tribes of Siberia good relationship with the spirits can be induced by mediums who beat large drumlike tambourines

and utter mysterious words.<91> In a Catholic country like the Philippines a specialist shaman in a good number of cases uses a garbled Latin prayer to communicate with the spirits and prevent them from bringing harm to the people. Many Filipinos also believe that the spirit of the dead does not leave the earth at once but roams around for 40 days perhaps a product of the belief that since Jesus stayed on earth for forty days after the resurrection so also the soul of the dead. Children are then asked to jump over the coffin or go under it to prevent the spirit of the dead from returning to visit and scare them.

The task of warding off spirits or appeasing them is the function of specialists known as shamans. These shamans know which spirits have been offended and what means are needed to appease or drive them away. The victims in most cases do not know which spirit has brought them harm and what means are needed to placate the anger of the spirit or repel it. Not all men can be shamans. Some are gifted and other inherit the gift. They are the mediators between men and the spirits. Shamans could be male or female. All shamans in Formosan tribes are female.<92> Their main functions are: (2) curing diseases, (b) performing rituals, and (c) making divinations. In Filipino animistic communities they can curse or bless on account of their close relationship with the spirits. They get their knowledge through dreams or become shamans "during the trance that follows a trembling fit or convulsions."<93> A shaman usually behaves strangely and becomes a loner. He is described either as weak or very strong.<94> The medium can also sometimes be a fortune teller and a fortune teller of coming events.<95> Among the Bataks any adult could make sacrifices to the spirits. However, the offices of hadatuon have developed a highly specialized system of liturgy, worship-objects, and methods not known to the general public. He can lure the tondi of the living and the begu of the dead.<96>

He could propitiate and coerce unfriendly spirits through curative medicinal and magical formula. He could control the weather, influence the harvest, and ascertain the future. The datu functioned as a physician to treat the sick and protect the healthy through his acquaintance with the ways of the tondi and begu...The datu has objects (carved) supplied with tondi power through a potion of material known as pupuk, especially powerful in tondi power. The object became a symbolic representation of supernatural power known as pagar (fence) to protect persons, houses, or whole villages from evil spirits...<97>

The Bataks also have a Si-baso or shaman, usually a woman who serves as contact between the Batak and his ancestral spirit. This person is chosen by the spirits themselves which take the place of her displaced tondi. The spirits then communicate directly with the community through the shaman. Because the life of the shaman is not easy and she is required to observe many taboos few persons want to serve in this office.<98>

While there is almost a unanimous agreement among animistic cultures that man has fallen from the ideal state, sin is not a major concept among the peoples. The same can be said of forgiveness.<99> Thus among the mountain tribes of Taiwan "there is no word 'sin' in the vocabulary of the tribal people." <100> There is more the sense of fear and shame for breaking taboos, traditions and laws but not the sense of guilt. For the animists there are no universal ethics. There are only ethics particularized by the family, clan or tribe through their cultural laws and customs. There is a vague concept of retribution based on morality.<101> There is no concept of divine grace, Good News or Heilsgeschichte - a salvation his-

tory wrought by God.

In summary one can say these of animistic religions:

1. It thrives in homogeneous, rural communities.
2. It's world is limited to a tribe or community.
3. It holds to a world filled with spirits.
4. It maintains that the family, clan or tribe consists of both the living and the dead.
5. It teaches that the spirits of the dead participate in the affairs of the living.
6. It believes that the spirits can bring either curse or blessing.
7. It values children for they are the carriers of the traditions and bring honor to the spirits.
8. It has no rational ethics for good and bad depend on customs and traditions and what the spirits want.
9. It professes that the spirits can be manipulated by the living.
10. It believes that spirits animate all of creation and influence all human and non human activities and events.
11. It can provide only doubt and fear of the supernatural.
12. While it teaches that there are many spirits, it has no concept of a Holy Spirit.
13. It views the afterworld as still a materialistic world.
14. It has no conviction of transmitting its beliefs to other peoples. Thus, it has no missionary activity.
15. It has a vague notion of a supreme God.

The Christian missionary strategy must take into consideration those beliefs in working in an animistic society.

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## SPIRIT AND SPIRITS IN CLASSICAL ASIAN RELIGIONS AND TRADITIONS

by Dr. Andrew Chiu (Hong Kong)

The writer has been assigned an insurmountable task; it is understandable that the topic must have some limitations, otherwise it would be impossible to cover such a big area in a limited time. For convenience of discussion, however, we will first divide our presentation into the following three parts:

1. A preliminary study on the Spirit and spirits.
2. Spirit and spirits in classical Asian Religions.
3. Spirit and spirits in Asian Traditions.

### 1. A Preliminary Study on the Spirit and Spirits

For English-speaking Christians, it is taken for granted that when reading a word "Spirit" with capital "S" it means the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit; when reading the word "spirit" with a small "s" it means something else.

The word spirit with a small "s", has many meanings. It may mean 1) one of the elements in man which is considered as separable from the flesh and animating the body; or 2) a person, from the moral, emotional or intellectual point of view; or, 3) a person's disposition, permanent or temporary mental attitude, or predominance of the spirit over the flesh especially as manifested in courage, energy or vivacity; or 4) the opposite of the word "letter", i.e., maintaining the principle, meaning or purpose underlying the form of a law; or, 5) a tendency which is prevailing at a time or among a class; or, 6) inclusion of the meaning of the buoyant mood or specified state of cheerfulness or despondency when it is in plural; or 7) simply some distilled alcoholic liquor, either in plural or singular form; and finally 8) it may also picture a disembodied person or incorporeal being. In this case, besides the meaning of God or gods, it often takes a plural form and may mean the good angels or the evil angels (the devil).

In the interest of this Symposium, we shall concentrate our discussion on the last point.

Unlike English, many languages do not have the advantage of using the capital and small letters to indicate the different meanings of a word. The Biblical languages among these.

Both the Hebrew word *Ruah* and the Greek word *Pneuma* can be translated as "breath" (Gen. 6:17; John 20:22 et al), "wind" (Gen. 3:8; John 3:8 et al) and "spirit" (Gen. 1:2; John 3:8 et al). In the New Testament, it says that "God is spirit" (John 4:24); in the Old Testament, however, the word *Elohim* is rendered into "God" or "gods", but in Ps. 8:5 it is translated as "angels", i.e., spiritual beings. On the other hand, the word *Pneuma* also conveys the meaning of "spirits" when it appears in plural form as in Matt. 10:1 (unclean "spirits") and 12:45 (seven other "spirits"). This indicated, then, the words "God", "gods", "Spirit", "spirits" and "angels" are interchangeable words from the Biblical point of view.

However, "of the angels", the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, asserts that "God makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire." (Heb. 1:7. Cf. Ps. 104:4). And angels are "ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation." (Heb. 1:14. Cf. Ps. 103:20-21). This assertion clearly maintains that "God" is not the "angels" nor the "spirits". For the Bible holds that "there is but one God." (cf. Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4; Is. 46:9; Jer. 10:6, 7; I Cor. 8:4, 6 et al.).

Nevertheless, the Bible also affirms that the Spirit not only proceeds from God as indicated in Is. 32:15 ("Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high"), Joel 2:28 (God says "That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind"), John 15:26 ("the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father") and other passages, it is God Himself. There are at least four reasons for us Christians to believe that the Spirit is God: 1) the Bible ascribes to the Spirit divine names as indicated in Acts 5:3-4 (the terms "Holy Spirit" and "God" are interchangeable) and I Cor. 3:16 ("the Spirit of God"); 2) the Scriptures record the divine attributes of the Spirit, such as omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-10), omniscience (I Cor. 2:10), omnipotence (Gen. 17:1; 35:11), eternity (Heb. 9:14), holiness (Matt. 28:19), etc.; 3) the Spirit also is active in the divine works which God alone can perform, such as creation of the world and all things (Ps. 33:6, Gen. 1:2) and the sanctification of man (Titus 3:5); 4) the Spirit has the divine honor and glory which God alone possesses, as 1 Peter 4:14 says ("the Spirit of glory and of God").

Although the Scriptures affirm that there is but one God, the Spirit is God and God is not the angels nor the spirits, yet the Bible recognizes the existence of the spirits and the worship of other gods. Even the forefathers of the people of Israel when they lived beyond the Euphrates, says Joshua; "served other gods." (Jos. 24:2). And before going up to Bethel, Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you...." (Gen. 35:2) The prophets lament the worship of the fertility gods, Baals, stones, trees, idols, etc. of the people of Israel and the house of Judah (see for example, Is. 57:5ff.; Jer. 3:9; Hos. 4:12ff.; Hab. 2:18).

For the Bible, especially in the New Testament, spirits are devils or demons. The demons have a ruler, Beelzebub (Cf. Luke 11:15).

The literal meaning of the term "devil" is "accuser" (1 Pet 5:8) and Satan is its descriptive name in the Scriptures. When the plural is used, it is for the fallen angels, demons, evil spirits or unclean spirits. The devil is the originator of all wickedness (Eph. 2:2) and an opponent of the kingdom of God. He is the tempter of God's faithful people (1 Pet. 5:8-9) and the one who had led Eve into sin and thereby became the originator and king of death (Heb. 2:14). Whence do the devils come? They were angels originally created good but by their own fault they fell and are destined to a future fearful sentence (Cf. Is. 14:12-15; Eze. 28:14-15; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 et al.).

The word "demon" means "a divinity" originally in Greek. In later usage, it became a term for a spirit either good or evil; a supernatural being intermediate between a man and a deity. In the New Testament, however, demons are evil spirits or devils.

The foregoing, obviously, is from a Christian point of view. Those Asians who adhere to the worship of one God alone, such as Judaism and Moslemism (Islam), may feel quite comfortable with the points discussed

although they may have some reservations about certain terminology. Most Asians, however, are not monotheists. To the polytheists and even the kathenotheists, there is no such clear separation between "God" and "gods" or between "Spirit" and "spirits". To them all the deities are "Gods" or "Spirits". Some of the "Gods" may be good and some may be bad; likewise, some of the "Spirits" may be good and others evil. Some of them may be in between good and evil in varying degrees.

Asia is the broadest continent of the world and it has more than half of the population of the human race. The ancient Asian civilizations, such as the Indian, the Babylonian, the Assyrian and the Chinese, are much older than the known European or American civilizations. Hence, it is self-evident that Asia would have many classical religions.

There were many sets of belief in ancient Assyria, Babylonia and Persia now known as the Middle East. The dominant religion in these areas at present is Moslemism. Since Moslemism is a montheistic religion which has a similar concept of Spirit and spirits as Judaism and Christianity, which also originated in the Middle East, we are not going to investigate them. However, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, the religions of Persia previous to the conversion to Moslemism, will be mentioned briefly.

In India and adjacent places the chief religion is Hinduism. Two of the offshoots of Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism, will be discussed in brief. Since the present writer's knowledge on these three religions is limited, and since the reactor of the paper is a scholar from India, we may expect to know more about the Spirit and spirits of the Hindus through him.

In southeast Asia, more than 85% of the peoples of Indonesia and nearby places are Moslems; about the same percentage of the population in the Philippines are members of the Roman Catholic Church. Thailand, Sri Lanka and their neighbours are mostly Buddhists.

In the East of Asia, China, Korea and Japan, the adherents of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are dominant. It is true that there are many traditional beliefs, such as Shintoism in Japan, Shamanism in Korea and Confucianism in China. However, these traditional beliefs will be discussed in the next section of our presentation.

Summing up the foregoing, we find that there are chiefly two kinds of classical religions in Asia: 1) The monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, Judaism and Moslemism; and 2) polytheistic religions such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism and Taoism. It is true that some of the latter religions are originally a kind of philosophy of life which were regarded either as atheism, pantheism, agnosticism or even monotheism. Nevertheless, our investigation is not centered on the question of theism but on the Spirit and spirits, although the latter will involve the deities in the discussion.

As mentioned earlier, monotheists more or less agree with the differentiation between "Spirit" and "spirits", as well as between "God" and "gods"; therefore, we are not going to spend any more time on discussing the concept of Spirit and spirits in Christianity, Judaism and Moslemism since we have briefly discussed this in the previous section. In regard to the rest of the classical Asian religions, i.e. Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism and Taoism, we will follow this sequence: first to give a brief description of the origin of the religion and then spell out the main Spirit and spirits which they

accept. We have to mention immediately here, however, that the Spirit and spirits upheld by the Asians are actually the "God" or "Gods" they believe in.

### Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrians are known to the Chinese as "Fire Worshipers", because in the temples of Zoroastrianism a holy fire is perpetually burning which is most carefully guarded and protected from contamination. The Indians, however, probably would call them "Parsees" instead of Zoroastrians because many of the Persians who adhered to Zoroastrianism moved to India in the 8th century when the Moslems conquered Persia.

The founder of Zoroastrianism was Zoroaster who lived probably long before the 7th century B.C. in Iran. However, the story as handed down by the Zoroastrians is that he was born in 660 B.C. At the age of 30 he was asked by the Wise Lord (Ahura Mazda) to preach monotheism in opposition to the contemporary polytheism. He went from court to court in Persia without success. Finally he converted King Vishtaspa in 618 B.C. Through the king's influence the new religion spread widely.

Avesta is the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism. Zend is their commentaries. The Zend-Avesta consists of three parts: Yasna (liturgical texts), Venidad (ritual laws) and Yashts (poems containing mythology and legends of ancient Iran).

Dualism is characteristic of Zoroastrianism. Besides Ahura Mazda, the creator of the universe, guardian of mankind and the source of all that is good, there existed from eternity a powerful evil spirit, Angra Mainyu (Ahriman) who is the source of all evil. Man is in between these two spirits and has free will to choose between good and evil.

There are many good spirits associated with Ahura Mazda. They are governed by 6 archangels who are personified attributes of the supreme god, Ahura Mazda: Good Thought, Best Righteousness, Wished-for Kingdom, Harmony on Earth, Salvation and Immortality. Associated with Ahriman is a hierarchy of evil spirits. These two forces will continuously be fighting against each other until the end of the world when Ahura Mazda will finally triumph and Ahriman be overthrown.

### Manichaeism

The founder of Manichaeism was Mani whose parents were both Persian aristocrats. He was born in 216 A.D. in Babylon. In 242 he started preaching to the Persians. He traveled for many years, visiting China and India and thereby became acquainted with the religions of these countries. Returning to Persia about 270, he gained many adherents, even at the court. But the hostile priests made the king crucify him in 277.

Manichaeism spread to the West and gained many adherents in the Roman Empire, especially among the educated. Even Augustine accepted this faith for nine years before he was converted to Christianity. Manichaeism spread to China in 694.

Based on Zoroastrianism's dualism, Manichaeism was also exceedingly syncretistic in character. Mani wanted to found a world religion and community in order to overcome the special limitations of the religious traditions founded before him. Therefore Mani incorporated elements from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity into his teaching. He claimed that each of the above mentioned religions was a preparatory



step in the universal message he proclaimed.

The main teaching of Manichaeism is that light and darkness, good and evil, are eternally at war. Satan and his hosts imprisoned the light in the dark chaos of matter. The goal of the world process is to restore the imprisoned light to its original habitat. Basically, man is a material house of the realm of evil. Some portion of the realm of light is confined in man. Various messengers have been sent by the Father of Goodness to liberate man from this bondage. Mani claimed that Jesus and other religious founders are some of these messengers but that Mani himself is the last and highest of them. For Manichaeism, salvation is dependent on the right knowledge of man's true nature and the desire to return to the realm of light, together with the extreme ascetic rejection of all that belongs to the realm of darkness.

There were two classes of members of Manichaeism: The perfect and the hearers. The concept of Spirit and spirit seems to be similar to that of Zoroastrianism but with different terminology since the western Manichaeans used many New Testament terms and the eastern Manichaeans borrowed many Buddhist words.

### Hinduism

It is very hard to describe Hinduism. It has no founder, no creed, and is not institutionalized. However, more than 80% of the people in India today are Hindus and there are many followers of Hinduism in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. In Bali, Indonesia, 98% of the residents adhere to this faith. In addition, there are many Hindus in Southeast Asia. In many Western cities, Hindu missionaries have opened a number of spiritual centers.

The Aryans came to India about 2000 B.C. when India was a flourishing civilization. Hinduism not only contains Aryan and pre-Aryan elements but also has picked up, in the course of history, all the beliefs and practices of this great land of India. Therefore, Hinduism is often described as a family of religions.

The following four Vedas are the primary sources and authoritative texts of Hinduism. The Rig-Veda, the Sama-Veda, the Yajur-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. Each of the Vedas consists of the following four main parts: The Mantras (hymns and chants), the Brahmanas (explanations of the Mantras and descriptions of the sacrificial rites) the Aranyakas (meditations) and the Upanishads (secret teachings of the nature of the universe and man's relation to it).

On the other hand, the two Indian national epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata are considered to be the common people's scriptures. Rama and Sita in the story of Ramayana are the ideal man and woman. Rama is the "incarnation" of God who had destroyed the demon-king Ravana. Mahabharata tells the story of a great war: The hundred Kaurava brothers (representing Evil) fighting against their five cousins, the Pandavas (representing Good). With the help of another "incarnation" of God, the Sri Krishna, The Good overcomes the Evil.

The best known book of the Hindus, however, is the Bhagavad Gita (the Song of the Lord) which is a part of the Mahabharata. This Song tells the doubts of one of the Good brothers: Even though his cause is just, yet, he ponders, "how can he fight against his own brothers?" Then, Krishna explains to him in the battlefield concerning man's duty--devotion to God and the selfless action of man.

In the Vedic Period, before 600 B.C., the Rig-Veda mentions many deities, such as the sky, the sun, the earth, the fire, the storm, but the chief gods were Indra (the god of power) and Varuna (the god of righteousness). Nevertheless, along with the worship of many gods through rituals and sacrifices, people were searching for the God behind the gods. The Upanishads teach this search for Ultimate Reality. The summary of the Upanishadic teaching is that the Supreme Soul of the Universe (the Spirit) which creates and sustains the universe is the same as the individual soul (or spirit) of man. Hence, there is one reality only--Brahman (the Spirit of the Universe) and atman (the human soul) are the same reality.

The caste system was developed in this period also. There is a mythical story in the Rig-Veda which tells the origin of this system: The Brahman (priestly class) was from the mouth of Brahma, the Creator; the Kshatriya (ruling class) from the arm of Brahma; the Vaisya (merchant class) from the thigh of Brahma, and the Sudra (the workmen) from the foot of Brahma.

Related to the caste system which belongs to man's practical life there is the doctrine of Karma which concerns the spiritual life of man. The law of Karma is that which makes a man today the result of what he was yesterday; what he will be tomorrow depends on what he is and how he lives today. A soul is not born nor does it die. Death follows birth and rebirth death. This process continues for many lives until the soul is purified and ready to merge with the Soul of the Universe which is the Ultimate Reality and the blissful destiny of man. In that reality, man has come out from the existence of this world and is liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth. This is the central faith of Hinduism.

Two religions, Jainism and Buddhism, came from Hinduism in the sixth century B.C. to protest the authoritarianism of the priests and the rigid religious rituals and sacrifices. There were many other movements from 600 to 200 B.C. The new movements left their marks on Hinduism such as the emphasis on morality and good works, the respect for animal life and the monastic orders. The worship of images also arose during this period.

After 200 B.C., however, a revival of Hinduism appeared. The Epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and other later ancient writings became the Scriptures of popular Hinduism from then on. Popular belief began to think of God as a person who has a threefold role (one God with three forms): Creator (Brahma), preserver (Vishnu) and destroyer (Siva). But, along with these three chief gods, people also worship Shakti (power) as personified in the mother-goddess. In the meanwhile, Bhakti (devotion) to the gods they worship is emphasized. Bhagavata Purana, the devotional literature of Hinduism appeared around 1000 A.D.

Moslems came to India in the 8th century A.D. Later, India was under Moslem rule for quite a long period. But Moslemism did not have a great impact in Hinduism. It did not weaken the caste system, nor the practice of idol worship. On the contrary, the presence of an entirely different religion made the Hindus more conscious of their Hinduism. They learned to fight for their faith and to resist the zeal of the new missionary faith.

About 1500 A.D., Kabirism and Sikhism arose among some of the more renowned reform movements which aimed to unite Moslemism with Hinduism. Sikhism, however, eventually developed into a new religion, one which

appears quite often in the news this year.

### Sikhism

Sikhism was started by Nanak Shah (1469-1538 A.D.) who was one of the disciples of Kabir (d. 1518). Originally, it was a Hindu sect and later grew to be a nation in the Punjab. In the capital, Amritsar, there is a huge golden temple. The sacred book of the Sikhs, the Gurthi (written in 1610 and augmented in 1696) is preserved there. Sikhism rejects the Hindu doctrines of reincarnation, karma and nirvana. They do not allow the adherents to smoke, to cut the hair, or to abandon their babies. In the middle of the 19th century, the Sikhs came into conflict with the British who were controlling the whole of India at that time. The British defeated them in two campaigns and annexed the Punjab state into India in 1849.

The chief religious tenet of the Sikhs is a monotheism as strict as that of the Moslems. As a consequence, there is not much discussion about the Spirit and spirits in Sikhism.

### Jainism

Jainism is a heterodox Hindu religion intermediate between Brahmanism and Buddhism. It was founded by Vardhamana Mahavira (b. about 540 B.C.). He became a monk at the age of 28. By renouncing the world he claimed to attain kevala (omniscience) at the age of 42 and thereby became Mahavira (Great Hero). He is also known as Jain which means the "Conqueror". Jainism holds that to be emancipated, one must lead an ascetic life; to reach the final bliss one has to possess the "Three Jewels": Right faith, right knowledge and right action.

Jainism regards the universe as eternal and denies the divine authority of the Vedas. There are five vows which must be kept by every Jain: 1) Not injuring any living thing; 2) Not uttering a lie; 3) Not stealing; 4) Abstaining from sexual intercourse; and 5) Renouncing all interest in the world.

Most of the adherents of Jainism today in India are wealthy people such as merchants and bankers. They have built many costly and beautiful temples. The most renowned temple of the Jains is the one at Mount Abu.

The Jains believe that only the substance of material things continues; their form is not stable. Following animism, the Jains maintain that everything has a soul but they do not believe that there is a Creator. They assert that the world is the composition of atoms which have existed from eternity.

Unlike the Sikhs the Jains worship the sages and there are many idols in their temples also. Yet, they do not accept the idea that there is a Spirit, though indirectly they give people an impression that they recognize the existence of spirits.

### Buddhism

Originally, Buddhism was one of the movements in the 6th century B.C. to protest the rigid authority of the priests of Hinduism and aimed to liberate the common people from the tyranny of religious rituals and sacrifices. Hence, genuine Buddhism has no place for God nor for a Saviour. It is a philosophy of life which wants to solve the mystery of life, the

dukkha (suffering of body and mind). The way for solving life's problem is to "do-it-yourself" and become an "enlightened one" which is the meaning of "Buddha".

The founder of Buddhism was Siddhartha Gautama (b. about 543 B.C.) who was a son of a Hindu chieftain in the Eastern part of India. This young prince had all the pleasures and comforts of life. Yet, after seeing the misery of an old man, a sick man and a corpse being carried by the weeping and wailing people, he was very distressed. After each such occasion, the young man returned home in silence. Despair, pain and sorrow besieged him until he saw a hermit who lived a life of happy peace in the midst of unrest, and security in the midst of insecurity. So the prince decided to renounce the world and to search for peace and security in the face of dukkha of this mortal life.

At the age of 29, when his son was born, Siddhartha left his family and went deep into a forest to meditate. He wanted to find a solution to the riddles of life: There is a getting born and a growing old, a dying and a being reborn; there is no way to escape from the suffering of life. So, Siddhartha became a hermit for six years. He sought for wisdom from philosophers and practised a rigid ascetic life. But he could not find the solution.

At last, Siddhartha sat under a tree and vowed that he would not move until he found the solution of his quest. Then, it was said that mara (the devil or the tempter) attacked him with storms, torrential rains and blazing weapons; it also seduced him by offering him the wealth of the world. But he was not moved. After 49 days of meditation he suddenly attained enlightenment. Then, for 49 (or 45) years he traveled all over northern India to teach and preach the message of hope and happiness.

The main teaching of Buddhism, based on Siddhartha Gautama's own experience and enlightenment, is that Buddha's followers should take the "Middle Way": avoiding lust through sensuous pleasures and asceticism, for both are foolish, ignoble, and profitless. The Middle Way which leads to peace is the Noble Eightfold Path: Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mind, Right Concentration, Right Views and Right Thought.

The reason man should take this Middle Way is that there are Four Noble Truths: 1) Suffering is a universal fact; 2) man has many desires and walking in the path of desires is the cause of sorrow; 3) cessation of sorrow is in the state of nirvana (dying out or extinction of the flames which are kindled by the fire of desire); 4) the way that leads to nirvana is the Noble Eightfold Path. This Eightfold Path leads to insight and wisdom which drive away ignorance. The result of the Eightfold Path is serenity, knowledge and enlightenment, i.e., nirvana, the state of perfect peace and bliss.

Unlike Christ, Buddha is not a saviour. He is only a guide or a teacher of the Way. Each person must work out his or her own salvation by his or her own effort. Buddhism teaches that man does not have an eternal and indestructible soul. On the contrary, there is no soul and nothing is permanent. Hence, the so-called "I" is only an illusion which is created by the combination of physical and mental forces. This illusive self in turn produced desires and thereby comes selfishness, egotism, ill-will, hatred, conceit, pride...and all other evils. All this makes suffering in life. The way to get rid of the evils of the world is to get rid of the false idea of the self.

Similar to Hinduism, Buddhism teaches Karma--What a man sows he shall reap. This law of karma (the law of cause and effect) operates by itself. No God, no prayers, ceremonies, rites, or offerings can alter this law. Like the Hindu's teaching, Buddhism holds that man has to go through many lives--a ceaseless series of birth and rebirths till the final release from the bonds of life takes place. In reincarnation, the past good or bad deeds determine whether a person is to be born as a god, a ghost, a person or an animal. The primary concern of Buddhism was to point out a way to put an end to reincarnation. The way is the Middle Way which consists of the Eightfold Path whose goal is nirvana.

In order to spread his teaching, Buddha sent out his disciples to many places. Hence, Buddhism spread far and wide although it gradually died out in India. Based on the Theravada Scriptures (the Canon of the School of Elders), the more authoritative and conservative traditions in Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism is well established in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Since the Theravada Buddhism aims at a personal achievement of nirvana and is less broad in scope it is called Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle).

The Canon of the School of Elders is known as "Three Baskets": 1) Vinaya-Pitaka (the Discipline Basket--regulations for the lives of monks and nuns), 2) Sutta-Pitaka (the Discourse Basket--collected discourses of Buddha) and 3) Abhihamma-Pitaka (the Metaphysical Basket-- doctrine and ethics).

The Buddhist sects in China, Japan, Korea, Nepal and Tibet made their own collections of holy books adding to the earlier texts. These books reflect a more liberal tradition--they teach a less severe doctrine and one more suited to the needs of ordinary people. This is known as Mahayana (Greater Vehicle). Like the Canon, the Mahayana Scriptures are divided into three chief categories: 1) Vinaya (rules for religious orders), 2) Sutras (discourses) and 3) Shastras (philosophical discussions).

The Mahayanist teaches that faith and devotion are sufficient to enable a person to be a true Buddhist and achieve the highest spiritual goals. The aim in Hinayana Buddhism is that a person should achieve nirvana. But the Mahayanist has another aim: to become a Bodhisattva (a compassionate one who made a vow to reach perfect illumination in order to help all others to gain the same illumination).

In theory, Buddhism is a religion of atheism. In practice, however, people in both Mahayana and Hinayana countries rely on the help of Buddhas and pay honour to them in numerous temples. The common people in Buddhist countries think of Siddhartha Gautama as the Devatideva (the God above God) who lives, knows, loves and is worthy of all adoration. Although Gautama Buddha never wanted to be worshiped in any form, he was nevertheless represented by images within four or five centuries after his death. Image-worship is essential in devotional life for Buddhists today.

Today's Buddhism is a mixture of Buddhist teaching and other religious beliefs and practices in each of the Buddhist countries. For example, Buddhism is mixed with Taoism in China, with Shintoism in Japan and with Shamanism in Korea. Therefore, for the ordinary Buddhists, besides Amitabha Buddha, Gautama Buddha, Vairocana Buddha, etc., as their Gods or Spirits, there are many gods and spirits, such as the Bodhi tree and other local gods. There are numerous Buddhist ceremonies and festivals. One of the most important functions of the ceremonies either inaugurat-

ing a new house or starting a new business, etc., is to ward off the malice of demons or evil spirits and to give blessings to those who participate in the occasion. So, one may say, today, there are many Spirits and spirits in Buddhism.

### Taoism

There are many schools of thought among the Chinese, yet for more than two thousand years only two schools of thought actually governed Chinese thinking: Confucianism and Taoism. The former became the orthodox faith in China in 136 B.C. by decree of Emperor Han Wu. Therefore, Chinese officials liked Confucius (551-479 B.C.), but writers and poets favored Laotse (b. 604 or 571 B.C.) and Chuangtse (399-295 B.C.), and both of the latter ones were considered as the chief founders of the Taoist School. When the writers and poets became officials, they favored Confucius openly but Laotse and Chuangtse secretly.

Laotse and Chuangtse are also names of the book written by Laotse and Chuangtse respectively. The former is better known as Tao Teh Ching which is the main source of Taoism both as a philosophy and as a religion. However, many scholars think that "Laotse" is a name to designate a person who is created for a literary purpose and is similar to the names in Chuangtse where there is a story of several "persons" discussing the Tao:

Ether asked Infinite, "Do you know Tao?"

"I don't know", replied Infinite.

He asked No-action the same question and No-action replied,

"I know Tao."

"So you know Tao. Can you specify?"

"Certainly. I know that Tao can be high, can be low, can be centered and can be dispersed. These are some of the specifications that I know."

Ether told No-beginning of No-action's words and asked, "Thus Infinite says he does not know and No-action says he knows. Who is right?"

"The one who thinks he does not know is profound, and the one who thinks he knows is shallow. The former deals with the inner reality, the latter with appearance."

Ether raised his head and sighed: "Then one who does not know really knows, and one who knows really does not know. Who knows this knowledge without knowing?"

Nevertheless, because the book, Tao Teh Ching, originally carried the name Laotse, many people thought the author was Laotse. And according to the legend which Taoists tell and which is combined with the records of a famous Chinese historian, Szemah Chien (145-85 B.C.), Laotse was born to a woman who had been pregnant for eighty years. When her child was born, he was white-haired and fully capable of speech. Thus he became known as Laotse, "the old boy". Laotse later became an archivist in the Chou Dynasty (1122-256 B.C.). When he became disillusioned as he saw the progressive decay in the dynasty, he decided to leave the country. As he approached the border, Yin Hsi, a customs official, invited him to be his guest and begged him to write down the main points of his thought for all posterity. Laotse did so and Tao Teh Ching was the result.

The original work of Tao Teh Ching consists of only five thousand words and was written in rhyme. Although there are many versions of the book, the present form of Tao Teh Ching is divided into two main sections: The first, chapters 1-37 is devoted to Tao, and the second, chapters 38-81,

to Teh (Virtue).

Tao has many meanings. From the Taoist philosophical point of view, Tao is an "X", like the unknown quantity of mathematics. It is the neuter pronoun of an abstraction "it" for something that is really unknowable. To express it in ontological terms "it" in reality is non-being. Laotse says:

The thing that is called Tao  
Is elusive, evasive. (Chapter 21)

Looked at, but cannot be seen  
Listened to, but cannot be heard...  
Grasped at, but cannot be touched...

The Form of formless.  
The Image of nothingness. (Chapter 14)

On the other hand, Tao is the transliteration of the Chinese character 道, or more accurately its phonetic reproduction. It may be used as a noun or as a verb. As a noun its literal meaning is "road", "path" or "way". However, the connotation is that of "the right way" or "the true path". In the religious sense, Tao has been translated as "Logos", "providence", "Power", "Nature", "The Way", "The Universal Supreme Reason" and even "God".

Originally Tao Teh Ching had no religious meaning. However, toward the end of Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), one Chang Tao-ling (34-157 A.D.) claimed to have had a special revelation from Laotse. What Chang taught was in some respects only a cult of health. But it went further than that. Apparently acquainted with some accounts of Zoroastrianism he encouraged worship of Heaven, Earth and Water and created a pantheon of angelic beings.

Chang Tao-ling and his followers annotated Tao Teh Ching to suit their purposes. Hence, Tao Teh Ching became a mystical book for many people. Although Taoists believed Laotse was the founder of their faith, they actually traced the origins of Taoism to Hwang-ti (or Yellow Emperor) who was also a legendary figure. Taoists thought so highly of Hwang-ti and his contribution to the early formulation of Taoist thought that they honored him by dating time from the start of his enthronement. According to legend, he occupied the throne from 2697 to 2597 B.C. Therefore, this year is 4682 for the Taoists.

There are many sects in the Taoist religion and they have taken over many gods and spirits of folk religions in China. Therefore, in Taoism there are many Gods and gods, as well as Spirits and spirits. Many of the Gods and Spirits are good but many gods and spirits are evil.

### Spirit and Spirits in Asian Traditions

Asia is truly a religious continent. There are people who adhere to monotheism, dualism, polytheism, kathenotheism and pantheism. Even those who hold atheism can have their faith organized as a religion. In addition, there are many folk religions. Most of the religions discussed in the previous section have deviated from their original elements and have become mixed with the folk religions.

The distinctive characteristics of a folk religion are the following: 1) It does not have a founder church which can be traced; 2) it does not

have a set of canons or scriptures; 3) it does not have a definite creed or a clear set of doctrines; 4) it has no special ceremonies for accepting members; 5) it has no theologians who study the religion and teach others the faith; 6) there is no missionary drive for spreading the faith; 7) it, in reality, is a phenomenon of the culture of a region or of a people.

Therefore, folk religions may be considered as traditions. Tradition, in general, may mean 1) the delivery or transmission of information, opinions, practices, customs, etc., especially from ancestors to posterity, with or without written memorials; or 2) a custom which has prevailed from generation to generation.

Based on the foregoing explanations, we find in Asia many different forms of worship handed down from the forefathers. The following worships and gods or spirits in these beliefs are but some examples. Since the spread of these worships is so wide and far, no distinct place of the faiths is given save some descriptions when and where needed.

#### Nature Worship

Nature worship in Asia includes the Heaven or heaven-god, the Sun or sun-god, the Moon or moon-god, star-gods or goddesses, mountain-gods, earth-gods or local gods, water-gods, fire-gods, thunder-gods, lightning-gods, rain-gods, wind-gods, etc.

#### Animal-Plant Worship

For many people it might be a laughable thing, but for many Asians Animal or Plant Worship is a serious faith. There are people who worship a monkey-god, tiger-god, cow-god, dog-god, cat-god, swine-god, turtlegod and so forth.

In some cases, these worships may have something to do with Totem Worship.

#### Fetish Worship

Fetish worship is not a kind of pantheism. In pantheism the god is everything and everything is a part of the god. Fetish worship is worshipping things. But not everything is worshiped as gods, only specific things, such as human bones, animal bones, human hair, animal hair, gates, doors, tables, chairs, beds, kitchens, charms or amulets, particular stones and other peculiar things.

#### Ancestor And Hero Worship

Ancestor worship is a worship directed to deceased parents or forefathers. This cult is based on a universal belief in the existence of an immaterial part of man. The deceased is believed to have the same kind of interest in the affairs of the living as when alive and to interfere in the course of events for the welfare of the family or clan. The deceased is able to protect his or her relatives, help them in war, give them success in their undertakings, and therefore, demand their continued service, reverence and sacrifice. Otherwise, the deceased may bring sickness, storms, calamities or other misfortunes upon them, if his or her worship is neglected.

Different places have different ways for this practice. The Chinese, however, believe that on death the soul of the deceased takes triple



form: One accompanies the body to the grave, one enters into the ancestral tablet and the third starts on its journey to the underworld. For this reason, the ancestral tablet is closely related to ancestor worship.

Ancestor worship also requires reverence to the corpse, the proper site for burial and the supply of the wants of the ancestral spirits in the underworld. In this regard, the spirits of those who are without family care after their death are called hungry ghosts and they must be propitiated and well fed so that they will not do harm to mortals.

Whether worshipping ancestors or making offerings to hungry ghosts, people can ask for health, wealth, posterity, long life, good business or even winning at gambling.

In the same manner, many spirits of heroes are worshiped. But the spirits of heroes are considered to be good spirits in most cases.

### Immortals and Imaginary-gods Worship

The immortals are the solitary men of the mountains. They appeared to have died yet are still alive--After death their bodies retain all the qualities of the living. The corpses are for them only the means of transition--a phase of metamorphosis. They can travel at will all over the universe.

The imaginary-gods are created by people who observed the ways of governing this world, the nation, the family, and therefore they think that the other world must be similar to this world. Since there is an emperor, or king in this world, there must be supreme Gods in the world above, in the world below and in the world of waters. As the emperor or king has many attendants, assistants, wives, door-keepers, detectives, executioners, male and female servants, etc., these gods must have the same.

Furthermore, just as there are provinces, countries, districts and so forth in a nation, there must be local gods in the other. All these gods or spirits may be either good or evil just as is the situation among human leaders.

In concluding the investigation of the Spirit and spirits in Asian traditions, the following four "isms" may serve to show some degree of development, namely, from Animism to Shamanism, Shintoism and Confucianism.

### Animism

Animism is not the same as Animatism. The latter is the belief in an impersonal, vague, supernatural power. Through this power, it is believed, things were created, preserved and replenished. However, this power was not personalized. Animism, on the other hand, is a belief that the phenomena of nature have been endowed with personal life.

Animism believes in spiritual beings. It holds that every man has two things: Life and phantom. These two are closely connected with the body: The life enables it to feel, to think and to act; the phantom is its image and second self. Both the life and phantom are believed to be separated from the body: The life may go away and make the body insensible or dead; the phantom may appear to people at a distance from the body. Later, people combine the life and phantom as a soul. This, then, is the

conception of the "anima"--the ghost-soul.

In some cases, souls are attributed to other living things (animals and plants) and even to inanimate objects (rocks, tools, springs, mountains, rivers, and heavenly bodies).

A third characteristic of Animism is the belief in spirits which are entirely without bodies. This, then, is the belief in spirits which cause illness and bring misfortune. Therefore, wherever Animism has great influence the life of the people is filled with dread and terror because of these invisible forces. Consequently, people seek to control them by magic or sorcery. This, then, introduces us to a discussion of Shamanism.

### Shamanism

Shamanism is universal and especially still flourishing in Siberia, Korea, Mainland China, Taiwan and the adjacent islands. It is practised by the Shamans. A shaman is a medicine man who combines the office of priest, prophet, exorcist, sorcerer and doctor. Since he has power by virtue of his acquaintance with the occult, he claims to be able to command supernatural forces, divinities, in order to heal sickness, to drive out evil spirits, to remove calamities and to bring blessings for those who employ him. The shaman also plays a leading role in ceremonial dances and feasts. The common characteristic of the Shaman's performances are the trance, which is induced by self-hypnotism, and the use of drums and other instruments.

Generally speaking, there are two ways to be a shaman. The first is by heredity or learning. When the hereditary principle is maintained, the father chooses one of his sons who already has the right symptoms, such as moroseness, excitability, fainting, love of solitude, etc., then the youth will receive the necessary education from his father or some old master shamans. However, he has to pass through certain initiatory ordeals. The second way is by the gift and choice of the gods or by a deceased shaman. It is said that in a certain ceremony, the entranced dancing shaman will point to someone and say that the god or spirit has chosen him to be its shaman; or, a person may dream that a deceased shaman visits him and commands him to be his successor. In such cases, the chosen person would show himself to be weak, as if dazed and nervous. He may suddenly utter incoherent words, fall unconscious, run through the forest, live on the bark of trees, throw himself into fire or water, lay hold on weapons and wound himself, etc. When some of these signs are revealed, an old shaman is summoned to instruct him in the lore of the spirits and acquaint him with the mode of invoking the spirits or gods.

Shamanism, then, is not only a kind of animistic cult, it is also a source of polytheism.

### Shintoism

Shintoism is a native religion of Japan which is crude polytheistic nature worship. It has no record of the beginning of the faith or of the founder. It has no creed or code of ethics for the followers. The term Shinto comes from two Chinese characters, 神道, in Japanese, it is kami no michi (the Way of the Gods).

The main sources for understanding Japanese cosmogony and mythology are the following two semihistorical records: Kojiki (Chronicles of Ancient

Events, compiled in 712 A.D.) and Nihon Shoki Chronicals of Japan compiled in 720 A.D.). From these we can see the traditional "history" of the land from creation to 697 A.D. in which we read of the kami (deity) being many. The male kami, Izanagi, and the female kami, Izanami, together brought the islands of Japan into existence and gave birth to the numerous gods and goddesses in the Shinto pantheon. But Amaterasu Omikami (the Sun Goddess) holds the highest rank. For in the 4th century A.D., after the Yamato clan started ruling Japan, this goddess has been regarded both as the guardian of agriculture and as the ancestress of the ruling family. Thus the link between Shinto and the royal family began.

Two centuries later, influenced by the Chinese culture and ancestor worship, not only the name Shinto officially appeared, but also the dead, especially the deceased emperors, famous men, scholars, and warriors were regarded as kami. Therefore, new kami were added daily. In 901 A.D., the official estimation of the number of the pantheon was at least 3,132.

Buddhism came into Japan in 552 A.D. It was a great influential force on the Japanese culture. About the 9th century, Shinto was almost absorbed by this foreign religion. A movement to unite Buddhism and Shintoism which was called Ryobu-Shinto prevailed but Buddhism exerted a greater influence. In the 18th century, a revival of Shintoism began and gradually led to the declaration of Shintoism as the state religion of Japan in 1868. So, all connections with Buddhism were officially cut. But the majority of the Japanese continued their beliefs and practices. They believe that Shintoism takes care of their needs in this world and Buddhism of the things after death.

After World War II, the occupying Allied powers abolished Shintoism but the old traditions revived not long after. Official statistics show a rapid growth every year in the number of Shintoist worshipers. Today, they are at least 100 million adherents of this native faith of Japan.

The question here might be this: Is this because of a desire to show patriotism? Or, is it because of the many gods and spirits which are near and easy to worship?

### Confucianism

Every nation has special features in its culture. The ancient Jews looked for signs while the Greek sought wisdom. The Greek philosophers zealously discussed the origin of the universe and the essence of the cosmos. But the sages in China dedicated their interest mainly to finding a way of life. Although they discussed the origin and the principles of the cosmos, they engaged in the study of the cosmos only to help them understand life more clearly.

During the Age of the Spring and Autumn Annals (772-481 B.C.) and the Age of the Warring States (403-222 B.C.) there were ten famous schools of thought prevailing in China: 1) The Literati (or Confucian School), 2) The Taoists, 3) The Yin and Yang School, 4) The Law School, 5) The School of Names, 6) The School of Motse, 7) The School of Politicians, 8) The Eclectics, 9) The School of Agriculture and 10) The "Storytellers (or Novelists)". Among them, Confucianism not only was listed in the first place, but also gradually absorbed good elements from all these schools of thought into itself.

Confucianism was founded by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) who was born into a

poor family. His father died when he was three years old. Facing the hardship and poverty in his early years not only made him to be a self-cultured man but also helped him to understand the life of the ordinary people.

Confucius opened a school when he was twenty years old. In his career as a teacher, he made no claim to originality of thought but was content to go back to the traditional manner of life of the forefathers and sages, and from the accumulated wisdom of the past to give a new spirit for right living in the present and the future.

After serving for a short time as a government official in Lu where he was born, he traveled for 14 years. From court to court he was seeking for a ruler who would accept his counsel but they all failed him. He then returned to Lu to teach, until the end of his life. However, after his death the prince of Lu built him a temple and offered him sacrifices.

To understand Confucianism one has to read the Five Classics and the Four Books. The Five Classics are as follows: 1) The Book of Changes (Yi Ching--manual of divination), 2) The Book of History (Shu Ching--A collection of documents ascribed to Emperors from Yao to early Chou Dynasty; an ethical teaching that Heaven blesses virtuous rulers alone), 3) The Book of Song (Shih Ching--a collection of poems), 4) The Book of Rites (Li Ki--A code of rules concerning worship and social and family relationships), 5) Spring and Autumn Annals (Chuen Chiu--Over 300 years events in the State of Lu).

The Four Books are the following: 1) The Great Learning (Taken from a part of The Book of Rites which tells rulers how to behave), 2) The Doctrine of the Means, 3) The Analects (Sayings of Confucius which were compiled by his disciples), and 4) The Mencius (Saying of the prominent successor of Confucius--Mencius, who lived 371-298 B.C.)

Confucius considered the impersonal Tien (Heaven) as a pantheistic cosmic principle in which natural phenomena and human destiny were grounded. The total duty of man is summed up in the word "reciprocity"--What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others. Filial piety and fraternal love are the root of benevolence which Confucius defined as love to all men.

Any one who has closely observed the teachings of Confucius would say that his aim was not so much the renovation of the individual but the state; his mind and object were ethico-political; his desire was the renaissance of the golden age of old through a return to the virtue of primitive times.

For the Confucians, the Tao (the Way) in which all things are made and in which they ought to live is the ultimate category, a correct understanding of this sacred order being essential for harmonious existence and right conduct. The chief concern of the Confucians is proper behaviour in this world.

Confucius and his followers never denied the existence of Heaven or the Supreme Ruler but their emphasis is always shifted from heaven to earth and from other-worldliness to this-worldliness. Whenever Confucius was asked about other-worldly things he drew attention to the matters of this world. Once he was questioned about serving the spirits of the dead, his reply was: "While you are not able to serve men how can you serve their spirits?" When he was questioned about death, he said,

"While you do not know life how can you know about death?"

In strictly religious terms , Confucianism, then, seems to belong to Agnosticism.

#### Postscript

The foregoing treatment, represents the writer's almost ten years teaching experience in Comparative Religions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Hong Kong, and also includes consultation of the books and articles listed in the next two pages. Since this paper is presented as a basis for discussion in the Third Luther Studies Symposium, and the scholars who attend this Symposium are already familiar with these basic materials, the writer has not taken the trouble of footnoting the discourse. Anyone who is interested in digging into the subject or some part of it may utilize the related books or articles in the Basic Bibliography on the following page.

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CONCEPT OF SPIRIT AND SPIRITS IN ASIAN SOCIOCULTURAL SPHERES

by Dr. S.M. Hutagalung (Indonesia)

It may be good to start with a brief explanation of what is meant here by the word "concept". "Concept" may be defined as a thought, an opinion, or an idea. In philosophical terms a concept is a mental image of a thing formed by generalization from particulars; also an idea of what a thing in general should be. Conceptualism is a philosophical position about the existence of universals. It holds that universals or general concepts exist in the mind rather than in nature. Conceptualism stands midway between two extreme views on the question of universals: realism and nominalism. A realist (for example Plato) believes that universals exist objectively in nature outside the individual subjective mind. Thus, for example: "The universal "tree-ness" is a substance or essence common to all trees". Nominalists - for example William of Occam - do not believe in the existence of universals, either in nature or in the mind. They believe that members of a given class or group of entities have in common only the name given to them. Thus for example, each tree is distinct in everything but name from every other tree.

As said before, conceptualism stands midway between the two extreme views. In the conceptualist's view: a particular object cannot be experienced (senses) as what it is if the perceiver is restricted to the particular sense experiences he has while confronting it. He or she must have a general concept to refer to in order to identify his perception. Thus for example, in order to think about a tree, one must have a general or universal idea of what a tree is, a general idea of tree-ness.

I think that in speaking about "Concepts of SPIRIT and spirits in Asian sociocultural spheres" the line of "conceptualism" seems to be nearer to the Asian situation.

Both the concepts of SPIRIT or Holy Spirit and spirits are perceived and experienced in a general atmosphere shaped by the ecclesial and sociocultural milieu. Universals permeate the ways in which men experience, think and talk about the particulars.

Although specific or particular experiences do exist, most of the concepts that are taken up here are those which are tapped from the general sources and culture in which they are found. The individual does not invent the concepts of SPIRIT and spirits but acquires them as his or her personal conviction in the atmosphere of interactions with others in the ecclesial and sociocultural situations.

Although the title of this paper speaks of the "Asian" situation, the examples and background will limit itself to sociocultural situations as can be found in Christianity, Islam, Balinese teaching and practice in the Indonesian setting.

Part I will deal with theological concepts of SPIRIT and spirits according to the teachings of Christianity, Islam and Balinese Hinduism.

Part II will deal with the sociocultural realities as can be found in daily life within the followers of the religions mentioned above. Since the theme of this APATS symposium is "The Holy Spirit and Christian Witness in Asia", I thought it proper to conclude with part III: The Call to



the Churches in Asia.

### 1. The Spirits and spirits: Biblical Foundation

1. Holy Scripture teaches us that God is SPIRIT (pneuma, see John 4:24), Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1). He is the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them (Acts 14:15). We furthermore learn from the Scripture that He is the only God: "There is no God but One" and that "idols have no real existence" (see: 1 Cor 8:4)

2. We also learn and believe that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit form the Trinity. At the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan river the Spirit of God descended on him and a voice from heaven, saying: "This is my beloved Son...". (Mat 3:16-17). God also said: "Let us make man in our image..." (Gen. 1:26). Also in Genesis 11:7 God, seeing the tower of Babel being built, said: "Come, let us go down and confuse their language...".

The baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 speaks of "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity and is one with the Father and the Son. The blessing as stated in II Corinthians 13:14 reads: The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

3. The Holy Spirit is foremost a third person in the Trinity, not just "power" or "influence" coming out of the Father. This can be seen from the actions and work done by the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit speaks to the Churches (Rev. 2:7); help our weakness (Roman 8:26); He is the Spirit of Truth, bearing witness to the Father (John 15:26) <1>

Sin against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (Mat. 12:31-32), and is guilty of eternal sin.

4. Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit A.W. Ness<2> sums up the following: Inspiring, enlightening, drawing, convicting, regenerating, sealing, witnessing, assuring, indwelling, mortifying, uniting, transforming, guiding, teaching, interceding, sanctifying.

5. Concerning the Fruit (Singular) of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believers, Galatians 5:22 mentions: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. To live by the Spirit is to have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another. (Gal. 5:25). These are "marks" of living according to the Spirit.

6. Luther's Small Catechism expounds the work of the Holy Spirit based on the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed in the following way:<3> "I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and on the last day he will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true."

In the words of E. Iserloh and Vilmos Vajta<4>: "It is the office of the

Spirit to save human beings through faith in the Son of God, sacrificed for us (CA 5), to justify human beings before God, to guard human beings from sin and the devil (CA 3,5) and to incorporate human beings into the divine life of Grace (CA 4,2)".

#### 7. Angels

We should also speak of the angels as spiritual beings. Angels are greater in might and power than human beings (2 Peter 2:11). Angels do not marry (Matthew 22:30), and according to Luke 20:36 angels do not die. Angels should not be worshiped; they are only servants of God and only God should be worshiped (Rev. 22:9). Angels appear before men (Luke 2:9 also John 20:12). The number of angels is plenty: "ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 5:11).

Angels belong to the "class" of ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation. (Hebrews 1:14). When appearing to men they are recognizable as divine beings, and in the case of Numbers 22:22 ff. was visible to the ass while not to Balaam.

In function the angels of the Lord (Malak Yahweh), can act as agents of destruction and judgment fulfilling God's command (2 Samuel 24:16; Acts 12:23); but also of protection and deliverance (Exodus 14:19; Psalms 34:7). They offer guidance and give instructions (Gen. 24:7 and 24:40). The angel of the Lord gave prior information about the birth of Samson (Judges 13:3 ff), John the Baptist (Luke 1:11) and Jesus (Matt. 1:20). Taken from the Hebrew word "Malak" and the Greek word "angelos", angels are etymologically and conceptually, messengers of God, familiar with God, face to face, and therefore of a being higher than that of men.

#### 8. The Devil and evil spirits

In the New Testament we find many references to devil, demons or evil spirits, referring to spiritual beings hostile to God and men<5>. According to Mark 3:22 Beelzebub is the "prince" of demons. (see also Matthew 10:25 and Matthew 12:24). The devil is also given the name SATAN (Satanos see Matthew 12:26). In John 12:31 the devil (diabolos) was termed by Jesus as "The ruler of this world". At the beginning of His ministry (see Matthew 4:1-11), Jesus was tempted by the devil (diabolos) and at the end Jesus sent the devil away saying: "Be gone, Satan" (Matthew 4:10). 1 Timothy 4:1 speaks about deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

Everywhere the New Testament sees a conflict between the forces of God, on the one hand, and the forces of evil led by the devil, on the other. The devil is the service of sin in this world (Rev. 12:9); the serpent who deceived Eve (2 Cor. 11:3); the one who has the power of death (Hebrews 2:14); the source of disease (Acts 10:38).

The strength of the power of the devil is described by Peter as "a roaring lion, seeking to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). At one time Paul sees the devil or Satan as "disguised as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14) pointing to the "attractive disguises of evil and the evil one".

The Ephesians were exhorted to put on "the whole armor of God to be able to withstand the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). 1 Timothy 3:7 and 2 Timothy 2:26 speak of the "snare of the devil". Thus the disguises and falseness of the devil and evil spirits are many, and the tenacity of Satan require "the whole armor of God" to withstand.

"Firmness in faith" (1 Peter 5:9) is the way to resist the devil. James 4:7 exhorts us that "to submit to God" is the right way "to resist the devil", who will then flee from the believer.

In this world the devil continues to oppose the Gospel and even infiltrate into the midst of the apostles (see for example Peter and Judas Iscariot). The general principle is that "he who commits sin is of the devil". (1 John 3:8). The New Testament is sure of the limitations and defeat of the devil. As in the case of Job (Job 1:12) the devil can exercise his activity only within the limits that God lays down. Satan is indeed a malignant reality, always hostile to God, to the works and witness of Christ and to God's people. But the devil and death have been defeated in Christ's redemptive work, in and through His life, death and resurrection. This defeat of the devil will become obvious and complete in the fulfilment of times, the end of the age.

In the words of Rev. 20:10 the devil was thrown into the lake of fire tormented day and night forever and ever.

9. The Holy Spirit is God's power for special activities in the history of God's act for the Salvation of mankind. From the Holy Spirit (Pneumatōs hagios) comes the power (dunamis) of the believers to withstand the temptations and deceits of the devil and unclean spirits. The direct relationship between the work of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit has been touched before, but I would like to stress that Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is always with Him.

In the words of Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament "Er (Jesus) ist nicht Pneumatiker sondern Herr des pneuma".<6>

In this connection, (see 1 Corinthians 2:6-16), those who have faith in Christ receive the power of the Spirit, since we have "the same Spirit of faith" (2 Cor. 4:13).

In closing one should also mention the difficult uses and understandings of the words "nephes" as spirit or "breath" in living beings; the word "psyche" the "soul" or "self" and the word "soma" (body) as the tripartite unity in human beings as a whole.

## 11. Concepts According to the Teachings of Islam

1. The sources of Islamic teaching are:
  - The Koran <7> as revealed to the Prophet Mohammed; the Sacred book of Islam.
  - The Hadith, the record of sayings and actions of the Prophet and his companions. (sometimes called the Sunna).
  - The Idjma (literally "agreeing upon"), is defined as the agreement of the leading theologians of the four orthodox usul or madjhabs of Islam, to form a judgment (after the death of the Prophet) in any age, and on any matter of the Muslim faith.
  - The Qias, or deduction by way of analogy for example, the deduction of legal prescriptions from the Koran and the sunna by analogical reasoning.
2. Speaking of the Spirit and spirits in Islamic understanding we find the word RUH meaning breath and wind (spirit).<8>  
 RUH has several uses. Allah blew of His ruh into Adam, giving life to Adam's body, (Sura 15:29), into Mary (Mariam) for the conception of Isa (21:91). Thus RUH equates with the "breath of life" (compare Gen. 2:7).  
 In Sura 26:2 Allah sends down the angels with "al-ruh" for messages. In Sura 42-52 to the Prophet was revealed ruh; furthermore to the Prophet came down the al-Ruh al-Amin (the faithful spirit), to

reveal the Koran.

ISA (Jesus) was mentioned to be assisted by Allah with the ruh al-kudus Holy Spirit (Sura 2:87; 2:253 and Sura V:110).

3. In Islam angels are called Malaika related to an early Semitic word, "malak" meaning messenger. In Sura 26:193-195 mention is made of "the Faithful Spirit" (al-ruh al-amin); he (Djibril) bringing down the revelation to the prophet Mohammed. In Sura 2:98 Mikail is mentioned as an angel of the same rank as Djibril. Another class of angels are those who praise Allah day and night without ceasing (Sura 21:29). They are guardians over mankind, cognizant of what man does, and making a record of it. The angels are also called the heavenly hosts, and guard the walls of heaven against "the listening" of the "djins" and "sjaitans". The angels are sometimes interpreted as having sex, but are not to be ascribed with either masculinity or femininity, and may not propagate their kind. They don't need food.
  4. One mazhab or Muslim Orthodox School (that of the Mutazilites) and some of the Asharites held the supreme excellency of the angels; that they are spirits, stripped of all materiality, free of even the beginnings of evils and defects like lust and anger; they are capable of doing wonderful things, knowing events without error.<9> The angels are intermediate of Allah and are the inhabitants of heaven and the heavenly spheres. Haji Hadyah Salim<10> of Indonesia, mentioned that the Jins (Djins) are spiritual beings, since they are invisible, but can manifest themselves in form anywhere in the world. They drink and eat: they marry and propagate their own kinds.
  5. Both Jins and human beings are created by Allah to obey Him. But some of the Jins have disobeyed Allah and these are the ones called "sjaitans" who are creating evil. IBLIS<11> or the Evil one (Devil) must have been a fallen angel. The Arab philologists derive it from the root b-l-s (ublisa) and he has nothing to expect from the mercy of God.
- The moral character of Iblis, the evil Jins and sjaitans, is full of pride, slander, malice, finding fault with Allah.
- In short the concept of Spirit (Ruh) is related to:
- a. with angels and creatures to give warning, messages, guidance for prophetic services;
  - b. with the Prophet for knowledge, faith, light and guidance;
  - c. the Holy Spirit confirmed upon Isa (Jesus);
  - d. other spiritual beings are called Jins, good and bad ones;
  - e. "Fallen" Jins are sometimes called "sjaitans" or evil spirits and are harmful creatures.
  - f. The Devil or IBLIS, is sometimes called "al-Sjaitan" but IBLIS is to be understood as a personal name of the devil.

In the Quran "nafs" is used for the "self". Living according to the anfas or nufas (plural of nafs) means living according to the flesh or desires, which is evil. (psuche in Pauline usage).

6. The existence of IBLIS is related to the creation of Adam. After Allah

had formed Adam out of earth and breathed the breath of life into him, he issued an order to the angels to bow down before him. The only one to refuse to do so was IBLIS, who thought it beneath his dignity to pay homage to a being made of earth. He was therefore banished and cursed. But he begged postponement of his punishment till the Day of Judgment. He was granted this as well to lead astray all those who are not true servants of God. IBLIS in this case called "sjaitan" was also the one to tempt Adam and Eve in Paradise to eat the fruit of the tree. IBLIS plays many a trick on men to lead them astray.

In the end IBLIS will be thrown into hell-fire with all his followers among men. (Sura 26:94ff). The phraseology of the Sura- verse resembles the words of Matthew 25:41.

7. From the above we see many similarities between the doctrinal concepts of Spirit and Spirits in Islam and Christianity. Islam however is very strongly monotheistic. The greatest sin, and one which cannot be forgiven, is shirk viz. associating God (Allah) with any other companions like in polytheism or even like in the Christian teaching of the Trinity, another feature is that Islam does not accept "original sin". In Islam we find the following "Iman Islam" (prescribed doctrinal beliefs):

- Belief in Allah
- The existence of angels and jins;
- The existence of the Rasul-rasul (prophets) and that the Prophet (Mohammed) is the final (and greatest) of all Rasuls
- Belief in the Doomsday (Hari Kiamat)
- Belief in predestination (takdir).

The pillars of Islam or the basis for right Muslim behaviour for earning merits or favour with God are:

- The Shahada or profession of faith: "There is no god but God; Mohammed is the prophet of God.
- The performance of the five compulsory daily prayers (salat) the zakat the giving of alms and practice of benevolence or charitable gifts;
- The fast of Ramadhan (the ninth month of the Muslim Calendar)
- The performance of the Hadj or pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca.

There is nothing of the Christian "sola gratis" and man must earn his merits.

### III. Spirit and spirits in Balinese-Hinduism

1. Buddhism and Hinduism which in their land of original birth were once strongly opposed to each other, "merged" together in Indonesia mixed with concepts of local village spirits and other godlings.

In the 9th and 10th centuries Buddhism had the supremacy culminating in the Buddhistic empire of Sriwijaya in South-Sumatra; followed by Hinduism during the expansion of power of the East-Java Hindu empire Mojopahit in the 14th and 15th century.<12>

Although the majority of the Indonesian people have become Muslims, at present some 80 to 90% of the Balinese people profess Hinduism Balinese style.

Furthermore the majority of the older generation of the Chinese adhere to the Chinese form of Buddhism with currents of Confucianism and Taoism.

The three highest Deities in Balinese-Hinduism are Brahma, creator of the world; Wisnu the preserver of nature and the world; and Sjiwa the destroyer portrayed as being surrounded by many evil spirits and terrible giants, and thus becoming the feared and thus most revered Godhead.

Together the three godheads are seen as TRIMURTI (TRINITY).

2. Balinese Hinduism<sup>13</sup> sees the mountains as the seat of deities and the spirits of ancestors. Since the mountains are in the eastern part of the island and the sun comes up from the East, Sjiwa as the Supreme godhead was considered to be settling on the Gunung Agung mountain on the Eastern part. Blessings, light and health come from the East, and since the sun sets down to the West, the West is conceived as origin of fear, suffering and death.

Apart from the division of East and West, however, there is a third part, the place where people live which is thought of as the middle world, between the higher (mountains) and the lower (the seaside) world. The people venerate a mixture of deities belonging to Hinduism and Hindu-Javanese archaic deities.

In the higher world (the mountains) are the deities and venerated spirits of ancestors who through purification have become deities, while the evil spirits are in the underworld, the seaside.

There are three forms of ancestor spirits: To the first class belong, the deceased ancestors who through ritual purification and burning of the corpse are declared and accepted almost "pure", but have not yet entered the status of deity, and therefore will continue to re-incarnate.

Secondly: the spirits of ancestors whose corpses have not been purified through rituals and burning are still unclean and their spirits and ghosts are considered to bring bad luck, accidents, diseases. The third group of ancestor spirits are those who have become one with the "original" ancestors of the Balinese and have entered the "moksha"- state or achieved the status of deity.

3. To the Balinese, the spirits of deceased ancestors seem to be living close to their kins. Very much feared and therefore requiring special ritual acts to guard them off are the ghosts or spirits of certain deceased persons, viz.:

a. The ghosts of people killed through sudden accidents, or those who were murdered; those who died through suicide or put to death through punishment by the civil magistrate. These ghosts are thought of as being "wild" because they did not get the full purification rites. (Bhuta).

b. The ghost of people with physical defects or invalid people are also very much feared. (Preta).

c. The ghost of immoral people, of drunkards and of deceivers are in the same class as b.

d. Other existing ghosts of this class are those bringing diseases and back luck.

Pilgrimages to holy places will bring blessing and good fortune.

#### 4. Places of worshipping the spirits.

Ancestor spirits are venerated or worshiped in small "mini-structure houses", situated in the backyard of the houses to the east-side. Here offerings (food and flowers) are brought, especially related to family matters like birth, marriages, etc. Every village has three different places for common or united worship.

- To the east-side in the village is the temple for the soil-deity.
- Outside the village, to the south-side is the temple for the not-yet purified spirits of the deceased. Since these kind of spirits are harmful, they are "confined" to that place, through special ceremonies. Thus, they can't go at will, to harass people.
- In the middle of the village is the central gathering place of the people for discussions and mutual deliberations both concerning religious and social matters.

There are of course other temples for other classes of deities. Special holy days are the Nyepi, the Hindu-Balinese New Year and the Galungan the Java-Balinese New Year.

The Nyepi is celebrated with abstention from labour and all festivities because during that day evil spirits are entering the villages. During the Galungan period, the spirits of the ancestors are believed to be descending from the mountains and remaining with their off-springs for some ten days.

Festivities, new clothing, eating-parties are arranged and offerings are placed for the ancestor spirits.

#### 5. Priests and Pedandas.

The Pedandas or Priests are from the Brahmana caste. The Pedandas are the ones to repeat the holy mantra's of sacred formulas, and performing ritual acts and meditations.

In the peak of meditative trance the penanda is possessed by the venerated deity, and all his acts and sayings will be interpreted as direct acts and sayings of the deity.

There are also priests from lower castes, with special duties and prerogatives.

#### 6. The cult for the dead.

There are two different cults. The original Balinese cult is not to bury the dead but to put the corpse in the woods or near a groove of a river. The other one is to purify the soul of the deceased by ritual burning.

There are two leading concepts underlying the cult for the dead. One is of reverence and honoring the deceased, the other stems from fear since the spirit or ghost of the deceased can bring all sorts of calamities to the living especially to the immediate family circle.

Therefore rituals are performed in trying to "pacify" the spirit or ghost. The first stage is to let the "soul" of the deceased part from the body. Then follows purification with fire and water and sprinkling the ashes into the sea.

A third stage is to perform another very costly rite, in order to purify the spirit of the deceased as such that it will enter the rank of deity.

Compared to Christianity, the great difference of Hinduism, including the Hindu-Balinese religion, is of course the deliverance of the self to human efforts, whether through the use of magical formulas, offerings, sacred literature and self-purification.

Another inherent feature like in many non-Christian religions is that although the deities and other spirits are feared, one can "force" these spirits, through specific rites, "domesticating" them, through the services of the priests or Pedandas, and specific offerings and rites.

#### IV. Sociocultural Realities concerning Spirit and spirits

1. The living realities of spirits in diverse manifestations in the lives of the people can be picked up from church-statements as expressed through their confessional statements, pastoral letters and other pronouncements of the Commission on Theology, etc. The "Great Spirit" among the Batak people of Indonesia as mentioned in the Batak Church Confession<sup><14></sup> is the worship of the Godhead MULAJADI NABOLON "The great source of origins" or translated as "The Great Beginner of Genesis"; the worship of tribal ancestors according to the Adat; the belief that the souls of the dead can communicate with the living; and other so-called "heathen" practices.

The Statement of Belief of the Lutheran Churches of Papua New Guinea<sup><15></sup> takes stand against: false gods; the belief in tambaran (ancestral spirit of the secret male cult; the masalai (good and evil spirits of the environment); ghosts of dead people and related to these, the practice of kago-cult, etc.<sup><16></sup>

Strangely enough the Doctrinal Statement Presenting the Confessional Basis of the FELCI (now the UELCI = United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India) made no mention at all of false gods and deities and was completely silent on "false teachings" to be rejected. This, in the midst of Godheads like Brahma, Wisnu, Sjiwa and hundreds of other deities and spirits.

2. However, confessional writings and statements as theological positions must be distinguished from acts of confessing. Doctrinal teachings based upon official source-books may be more or less clear, but in actual life these teachings meet the religious-socio-cultural givens and challenges inherent in the existing cultures. Concepts of supreme godheads and spirits both benevolent and harmful ones, are deeply imbedded in the adat or the "right" traditional way of life, based on the teachings of the ancestors. Thus for example: Although Christianity has entered the Batak country since 1861 and in spite of the fact that the Batak Church is the biggest church in Asia (with a membership of over 1,500,000) practices of indigenous religious beliefs can be found among Christians.

One overall concept of belief in spirit in Asia is the belief in ghosts, the "spirit" or "soul" of deceased persons, believed to be manifesting itself to the living. Such beliefs are essentially of two types: those concerned with harmful or vengeful spirits and those dealing with the ghost or "soul" of beloved persons who may be helpful and the source of many blessings to their offsprings.

Where ghosts and evil spirits are feared, the places where they are feared to haunt become "taboo". Special offerings are put under big trees, or near big stones, near the riverside or seaside or in the forests to keep these harmful spirits there, so as not to frighten or disturb the living.



3. Contacts with the dead may be sought through special mediums, such as bokshu's among the Chinese Buddhists in Indonesia, or through datu's among the "Christian" Bataks, or through the Pedandas among the Hindu-Balinese.

However, there is a great variety in the types of mediumship.<17> There are also cases of Spirit-possession: the control of an individual by the spirit of a dead person or by a demon. With or without trance, spirits are believed to be able to give counsel, messages, etc. Within the traditional Batak belief we find all sorts of ghosts related to the way people died; also depending on the former status of ancestors during their lives and the funeral rites.

Related to ancestor-veneration is the belief that the ancestor-spirits have religious powers as agents of bliss and woe.<18> The same can be found among Hindu-Balinese people, although the Balinese seem to show more reverence to their ancestors through daily offerings of food or flowers than the Bataks. On the other hand important ancestors of the clan are "honored" by the clan through the erection of costly Tugu or monuments or sarcophagus.

4. In general, Indonesian Chinese people, claiming to be Buddhists, feel very close to their deceased parents, and special places for veneration can be found in their homes. Offering of food, mini-paper houses, minipaper TV sets are seen to be offered to the spirits of parents or ancestors.

Muslims may be quoted as the group of religious people who do not believe in ancestor worship nor in spirits, except the ones prescribed by the Koran, Shirk as sin, is unforgivable by God. Muslims do not believe in the arwah or soul of deceased persons to be capable to communicate with the living.

What we do find in Islam is the mystical and ascetic tradition of Sufism<19> claiming to be the way to progress into union with God. On the Indonesian scene we therefore find the so-called famous pesantrens (one, which was famous was Tebu Ireng in West Java), where it was believed one can learn through mystical rites of meditation taught by the Shayk or Seik to be immune to rifle-shots, etc.

Great reverence is paid to famous Sheiks, and their graves often become places of pilgrimages.

Papua New Guinea and the rest of Melanesian territory have their traditional beliefs in many spirits, both good and evil ones. Ancestor spirits are the souls of the dead people taking many forms. Some spirits are even owned by certain clans or villages.<20>

Like in animism, rock, trees, birds, etc. can be the seat of a spirit, and within the sociocultural setting of thinking and accepting the spirits to be almost anywhere, life is beset with religious rites, religious formulas and offerings, to guard off or to appease the spirits.

5. Regarding the "High Gods" or supreme deities, there seems to be similarities in many of the above beliefs/religions. The Creator-God of the Bataks (The Debata Mulajadi Nabolon), for example is considered to be the highest godhead, but like in most archaic religions, they are too far removed from the people and therefore less "feared".

In the Hindu-Balinese setting the order of godheads is Brahma, Wisnu, Sjiwa but in daily life Sjiwa is more feared and venerated because he is the deity of death and destruction, surrounded by evil spirits.

Muslims and Christians have much in common as to the concept of God, the existence of the Holy Spirit, angels and fallen ones, the existence of evil spirits.

However, the concept of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity, and the function of the Holy Spirit as the agent of faith in Christ, mediator of the real presence of Christ, the Saviour, etc. within Christianity is different from that among Muslims.

The Muslim concept of the Holy Spirit as the source of revelation and enlightenment to the Prophet is near to the Christian teaching, but not in the actual life of Muslims.

While Christians believe in the gift and fruit of the Holy Spirit, Islam and other non-Christian religions seem to concentrate on attaining spirituality and "spiritual" development through rigorous religious performances.

All these should of course not be seen as degrading other religions. We should also recognize the sense of the Majesty of Allah and the consequent reverence in worship; the sense of brotherhood in Islam, which are conspicuous in Islam.<21>

In Hinduism we find the prominence of the deep longing for contact with the ultimate reality conceived as spiritual; the belief in the moral order of the universe and consequent insistence on moral conduct in Confucianism.

There is the deep sympathy for the world sorrow and unselfish search for the Nirvana which lies in the heart of Buddhism.

### III. The Call to the Churches of Asia

1. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is, as one commentator puts it, (at one time) the most neglected doctrine of the Christian faith, while one can say that the New Testament is preeminently the book of the Holy Spirit. Whereas all other sins are forgivable, the sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. While the Christian teaching is as firmly Christocentric as well as pneuma-centric, the doctrine of the SPIRIT has remained peripheral for the most part in the long history of doctrinal thinking and with it, in the ecclesial and sociocultural life of Christians.<22>

It is therefore not surprising that in the religious-cultural setting of the people of Asia, beset with so many concepts and belief in spirits and ghosts, the power and fear of spirits, ghosts, ancestor spirits, and other demonic beings remain sinbedded in many Christian lives. In spite of the fact that in all Christian Catechism the Third Article of the Confession is taught and learned, a clear understanding of the Holy Spirit is often still missing.

2. In the "Tok Bilip Bilong Yumi" (A Statement of Faith),<23> prepared by the Committee on Theology and InterChurch Relations of several Lutheran churches and Lutheran missions in 1972 an article on "The Holy Spirit" is missing, while a full article (article 12) comprising of five pages is devoted to take up (and fight) "The Works of SATAN". It is astonishing to

find so many things mentioned as the work of the devil, for example false gods, ancestral spirits, Kago cult, ghost of dead people, sorcery, etc...., but nowhere in the fight against the devil and evil spirits the word Holy Spirit is mentioned. In spite of the fact that the reality of spirits and other "forces" prevades the life of the people, the church seems to be "quiet" and hesitant to tackle with the problem. The result is a kind of dualistic attitude of the people towards the spirits, the official church position being either to ignore or belittle the evil spirits and spirit possession, while in practice many Christians in Asia do recognize them and cope with them even if often under "disguished" cover of secrecy. Special mention must be made of the Batak Church Confession of Faith, <24> where for example the Holy Spirit is taken up and applied to its function in function with regard to teaching reservation in faith and holiness while heathen practices are mentioned and rejected.

3. The churches need to recognize that even in this modern times of technological and scientific advancement, the reality of the spirits is still deeply rooted in the Asian worldview. Religious cults veneration of ancestral spirits, sorcery, the use of media in foretelling the future, practices of healing involving spirits are still going on.

As John Mbiti<25> puts it: "The reality of the spirits is an issue that concerns questions which every one asks in one way or another". Questions like: what happens to me or to my relatives after death; is there a spirit world, and how does it affect me; where is the "soul" after death and other body-soul issues, are searching for clearer biblical (Christian) answers."

4. It is clear that Jesus himself acknowledged the reality of demonic and evil spirits. He cast out demons and foul spirits, subjecting them to His command (see for example Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:25; Luke 13:16, etc.) through the power of the Holy Spirit in Him. There are of course difficult passages in the scripture like "an evil spirit from the Lord" (1 Sam. 16:14); "the evil spirit from God" (1 Sam 16:16); Jesus preaching to "the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19), etc.

Furthermore, what can we say about the many cures, the comfort received, the help of the so-called "diviners" or Christian, individuals handling spirit matters?

Can some of them be seen or included into the "class" of the man casting out demons in Jesus name, in which Jesus answering His disciples said: "Do not forbid him...For he that is not against us is for us!" (Mark. 9:38-40).

5. A deeper understanding concerning the person of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus; the Holy Spirit at work in the church and believers, would provide positive answers to the existing concepts of spirits, and to the many forms of ancestor spirits, removing much fear and anxieties among the people.

The big "gap" between doctrinal acceptance and of the Holy Spirit among Christians, on the one hand, and living amidst realities of evil spirits, ghosts, etc. in the sociocultural context, on the other hand, the lingering source for much confusion, syncretism, fear and suffering. It is a good sign, that in several churches new efforts with more depth and clarity are being undertaken on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Without clearer visions and understanding regarding spirit and spirits, evangelistic endeavors in the ecclesial, sociocultural spheres will lack incentive and zeal.

## FOOTNOTES

to the lecture by Dr. S. Hutagalung

1. Compare: E. van der Molen: Hal-halyang pasti - (What is Certain), Leewarden.
2. See: A.W. Ness: The Holy Spirit, vol. I. pp. 92-159.
3. The text is from Th. Tappert: The Book of Concord, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959 p. 345.
4. Article in George Forell and James McCue (eds): Confessing One Faith, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982, p. 202-203. (C.A. stands for Confessio Augustana).
5. Compare with: The New Bible Dictionary, London, 1962, article on SATAN, pp. 1145-1146. Also: E. van der Molen: Hal-hal yang pasti.
6. Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Christian Theology, page 402. See also: Handbook of "soul" and "spirit".
7. See for fuller explanations of each word, H.A. Gibb and J.H. Kramers (eds) Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, Ithaca: Cornell, 1965.
8. Compare: Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, article on MALAIKA (angels), pp. 318-319.
9. Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, p. 320.
10. H. Hadyah Salim: Apa Arti Hidup (What is the meaning of life); Bandung: P.T. Almaarif, 1983, p. 71.
11. Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, pp. 145-146; article on IBLIS.
12. See: Hutagalung: The Problem of Religious Freedom in Indonesia, Doctoral Dissertation, Yale 1958, p. 20 ff. Also: de Klesck: History of the Netherlands East Indies, vol. I, p. 363 ff.
13. Most of the information is taken from Dr. Harun Hadiwijono: Agama Hindu dan Buddha, Jakarta BPK, 1976. Also from research done by the writer of this article, in Bali.
14. See Dr. Andar Lumbantobing's article on "The Confession of the Batak Church", in The Church and the Confessions, V. Vajta and H. Weissgerber (eds); Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963, pp. 119-147.
15. A.B. Sinaga OMF. Cap.: The Toba-Batak High God, West-Germany: Anthropos Institute, 1981.
16. Christ in Melanesia, Point 1977, will be very helpful also on this topic.
17. The writer of this article has met in Bali a Hindu priest who told him through "mental-mediumship" what the spirit of his father has to tell him. Of five statements, however, two can be taken as reasonably true, while three statements were totally wrong.
18. Three outstanding books in English related to this topic among

the Bataks are:

- 1) Lothar Schreiner: Adat und Evangelium, Gerd Mohn, 1972.
  - 2) Ph. Lumbantobing: The Structure of Toba-Batak Belief in the High God; Amsterdam, 1956.
  - 3) A.B. Sinaga, OMF. Cap. The Toba-Batak High God, West-Germany, 1981.
19. See for more details:  
Harun Hadiwijono: Kebatinan Islam Abad XVI, Jakarta: BPK.  
Also Vol. 25 Encyclopedia Americana.
  20. An interesting informative article can be found in Christ in Melanesia, op. cit.  
Recommendable is also: Ch. Keysser: A People Reborn, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1980.
  21. This and the following comments on other religions are taken from Leslie Newbigin: The Finality of Christ, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1969, p. 29.
  22. Quoted freely from Handbook of Chr. Theology, page 170.  
This is not to deny the present ongoing interest of Christians in the so-called "charismatic movement".
  23. "Tok Bilip Bilong Mumi, A Statement of Faith, Madang (Papua New Guinea): Kristen Press Inc., 1972.  
Compare with: The Confession of Faith of the HKBP (Batak Church) in V. Vajta The Church and the Confessions, 1963.
  24. Ibid...articles 3; 8; 15.
  25. John Mbiti in "Comments on the Issue of Spirit Possession and the Church, Synod in Arusha Region, Tanzania.  
(In a letter to the LWF and to the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, July 1981). See also:  
  
S.P. Hebart: Article in "The Lutheran", November 3, 1980 on The State of the Soul After Death. Another article of the same interest on "Body-Soul Issue" can be found in The Lutheran, March 28, 1983.

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2. de Klerck: History of the Netherlands East Indies, Vol. I.
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14. Newbigin, L.: The Finality of Christ, Richmont: John Knox Press, 1969.
15. Point 1977: Christ in Melanesia, Exploring Theological Issues.
16. Schreiner, L.: Adat and Evangelism, Gerd Mohn, 1972.
17. Sinaga, A.B., OMF, Cap.: The Toba-Batak High God, West Germany: Anthropos Institute, 1981.
18. Tappert, Th.: The Book of Concord, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959.
19. The Lutheran: November 3, 1980 see article by S.T. Hebart: The State of the Soul after Death.
20. The New Bible Dictionary, London 1962.
21. Tok Bilip Bilong Yumi, A Statement of Faith, Madang Kristen Press, 1972.
22. Vajta, J. and H. Weissgerber (eds): The Church and the Confessions, see article by Andar Lumbantobing on "The Confession of the Batak Church" Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963, pp. 119-147.

23. Von der Molen E.: Hal-hal yang Pasti (What is Certain),  
Leewarden-Holland.

### LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

by Dr. Maurice Schild (Australia)

Luther wrote no systematic treatise on the subject. As usual, also in this area his theological statements took form and came to birth in and for his work as a lecturer, preacher and communicator, and they show his lively engagement with practice and reality. Indeed, Luther's pneumatology (his teaching on the pneuma = Spirit) is possibly that dimension of his thinking in which the characteristics of 'applied theology' would seem most natural and expected, if so be that 'Spirit... is personal being...creative, participatory, present to and in the other.'<sup>1</sup> Certainly his catechism, confessions and polemical tracts against the spiritualists of his time provide the most revealing texts for the topic; and his many Pentecost sermons (35 sermons on Acts 2 survive) and his three hymns of the Spirit obviously bring the practice and worship of the Church into view. To speak of the Spirit means for Luther also to speak of the life of the Church. Of course, as Regin Prenter's important book, Spiritus Creator, soon makes clear, what Luther says of the Spirit has been worked out in the depths and took shape in lectures on the Psalms and Romans. It is anything but a set of afterthoughts prompted simply by the shape of the traditional trinitarian Creed or made necessary by the encroachments of 'fanatics' and left wing reformers. Rather, his understanding of the Holy Spirit coheres with his witness to Christ and is inseparable from his confession of God.

Another tension quickly springs to light. Luther's discourse on the Spirit seems not as original at first as one might desire or expect. He appears to have accepted the Old Church dogma of the person and divinity of the Holy Spirit without deep question. In his Pentecost hymns he made use of older materials in every case.<sup>2</sup> And not Luther but his 'left wing' opponents in matters of the Spirit are today referred to as having produced the 'radical Reformation'. Moreover, many of his sermons touch on topics given better treatment elsewhere in his writings and yet returned to regularly at Pentecost down through the years. Thus also in this area the dictum of O.H. Peach is true that 'the anti-traditionalism of Luther is a fable'.<sup>3</sup> It is with such facts in mind that we should on the other hand register scholarly claims that Luther brings a new profile to pneumatology <sup>4</sup> and that, from a point of view of the history of dogma, the Reformation represents the discovery and unfolding <sup>5</sup> of the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

#### 1. 'Give me understanding' (Ps.119:125)

A breathtaking insight into the dynamic of doctrinal development appears in Luther's early comments (1515) on this verse:

'He (the Psalmist) prays for understanding against the letter, because the spirit is understanding. But as the time increased, so also the letter and the spirit...And this because of progress. For, as I said, everyone who moves forward forgets what is behind him, which is for him the letter, and he reaches out to what is before him, which for him is the spirit. For always what is possessed is the letter in relation to what is acquired... Thus the article of the Trinity as expressed in the time of Arius was spirit



and given to few, but it is now the letter, because it has been revealed, unless we, too, add something, namely, a living faith in the Trinity. Therefore we must always pray for understanding, so that we do not become dull in the killing letter.'<6>

The roots for this are already clearly visible in the first Preface to the Psalms lectures (1513): 'it is best to distinguish the spirit from the letter in the Sacred Scriptures, for this is what makes one a theologian indeed.'<7>

Several comments might be made here: -

a) The dialectic of law and Gospel has at this point been deepened by that of letter and Spirit (cf. the comments on Ps. 71, LW 10, 400f).<8> The consequent, really radical re-formation of medieval Scripture interpretation results in Luther's christocentric understanding of the Bible, which is also already apparent in 1513 in a second memorable preface to the first Psalms lectures, the so-called 'Preface of Jesus Christ, Son of God and our Lord, to the Psalter of David' (LW 10, 6-7). The soteriological depth dimensions here implied were to emerge continually in Luther's teaching and preaching; thus words of anguish for sin in the Psalter led to this comment in 1535:

'In these psalms the Holy Spirit is speaking in the Person of Christ and testifying in clear words that He has sinned or has sins. These testimonies of the psalms are not the words of an innocent one; they are the words of the suffering Christ, who undertook to bear the person of all sinners and therefore was made guilty of the sins of the entire world.' (LW 26, 279).

b) Luther's appropriation of trinitarian dogma, together with its affirmations respecting the Holy Spirit, is not according to the letter but in the understanding of the Spirit; it falls within the compass of what he calls 'a living faith in the Trinity'. Albrecht Peters has accordingly spoken of us properly recognizing and honouring the Triune God only where in the Spirit we penetrate ('hindurchdringen') to the fatherly heart of God through the Son.<9>

c) 'What makes a theologian?' In 1538 the Reformer again answered this question (in the preface to his German Works) - by pointing to Psalm 119(!): 'There you will find three rules, amply presented throughout the whole Psalm. They are *Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*.' (Prayer, meditation, temptation, LW 34, 285). Luther leaves no doubt that these activities are rightly bound to Bible and Spirit; thus, with respect to the first (*oratio*):

'Kneel down in your little room and pray to God with real humility and earnestness, that he through his dear Son may give you his Holy Spirit, who will enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding.' (ibid).

'The "spiritual" is the category of true understanding.' (Ebeling).<10> Such understanding, interpretation and acceptance involved recognition of our need before the divine demand, for we are 'flesh', and of the entry of Christ into our position to bear the curse. In the 1535 Galatians lectures the seasoned Reformer could therefore write:

'This is really the apostolic way to interpret the Scriptures. For without the Holy Spirit a man cannot speak this way; that is,

he cannot include the entire Law in one word and gather it all at once in Christ, and, on the other hand, include all the promises of Scripture and say that these are fulfilled in Christ once and for all.' (LW 26, 289)

## 2. Christ and The Spirit for us sinners

Luther cannot long speak of the Holy Spirit without speaking of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this christological concentration of his pneumatology is of the essence. The Word, which is Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is also the good news of His saving action in history brought to our hearing (by it comes faith) by the enlightening Spirit today. The incarnation of Christ is matched by the inverbation of the Spirit.<11> And whereas at sundry times and in diverse manners the unquestioned centrality of Christ and justification for his sake alone are attested by Luther, somewhat similar evidence can be adduced for the special prominence of the Third Article of the Creed, - from the arresting statement that the article of the Holy Spirit is 'the most important article of the Creed; all the others are based on it'<12> to the observation<13> that the space devoted to the explanation of the Three Articles in the Large Catechism is of the ratio 4:3:11.

However, far from being in competition with the Son, the Spirit actually secures the sole rights of the Son in the redemption, lives and doings of the redeemed. He insures that the activity of believing, being Christians and belonging to the Church a) actually takes place and b) does not allow salvation - freely bestowed because of Christ alone - to become after all conditionals upon (and quickly disqualified by) our human efforts, piety and achievements. And that is expressed in that desperate opening clause of the Small Catechism statement: 'I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him,...' This is the totally impossible situation also pertaining at the beginning of the fourth article of the Augsburg Confession and based on Luther's radical view of the whole man as flesh, under the law, not 'adjectivally' but 'substantively' sinner, unable to call upon God and fleeing His presence as one whose will is ridden by the anti-spirit, the devil.<14> But that catechism sentence continues - with the new subject taking over: 'but the Holy Spirit...' has gone on and done it all, does it all for all who are Christ's, for the whole terrestrial communion of saints (recall the twofold string of verbs) whose celestial future is therefore eternally assured in God's presence. For our sake the Spirit performs all this for Christ's sake. Otherwise - in terms of the Large Catechism - 'all is lost', 'man and evil spirits...teaching us to obtain grace and be saved by works'.<15>

It is in view of the serious condition and impending death of the sinner that the creedal confession of the divine Spirit as Lord and as lifegiver is so appropriately relevant. And this power and life, Luther maintains, is something we can also feel and experience <16> when He works in us through the Word. In this context occur the frequent references to the Spirit's office as Comforter (the 'right true liturgy' which He performs in the faithful<17> and His work of getting us to call God 'Abba, Father'. Luther's unforgettable preaching of John 14:16 highlights the contrast; because of Christ the landscape of fear comes under the light of the sweet smile of God and all the angels. Unable to leave the topic he says of the Spirit:

'He is called a Comforter, and that for our sake. So far as His deity is concerned, He is an indivisible Divine Essence with the Father and the Son. But for us He is called a Comforter. This name is nothing else than a revelation or realization of what to think of the Holy Spirit, namely, that He is a Comforter. But a Comforter is not a Moses or a lawgiver, who frightens with the devil, death, and hell; He is one who can fill a saddened heart with laughter and joy toward God, bids you to be of good cheer because of the forgiveness of your sins, slays death, opens heaven, and makes God smile upon you.'<sup>18</sup>

The Spirit supports and reveals Christ as the only Saviour, as the gracious God we need. The Spirit secures the solus Christus.

3. The God 'who daily sanctifies us through the forgiveness of sins'<sup>19</sup>  
 (Observations on Luther's Large Catechism explanation of the Third Article - text supplied)

The relative length of Luther's Large Catechism statement has been noted; but it proceeds medias in res. Much is said, even more implied. Thus, a plurality of spirits is acknowledged; among them the Holy Spirit is distinguished - by His holiness, 'by which He makes us holy'; we are to be defined by this divine reality, rather than that God be grasped by means of a human though religious idea (holiness) or be influenced in our favour by pious realizations of this idea. Already a critical understanding of 'holiness' is implied.

Secondly, though the Catechism is a teaching document, statements here fall like confessions, clear echoes of the Creed. This is even more evident in the 1528 sermons on the Catechism (a regular Wittenberg practice arising out of the initiative of Luther and Bugenhagen), to which the Large Catechism is most directly related. Thus, in the pulpit the Reformer affirmed: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit because he has sanctified and still sanctifies me' (LW 51, 166). Proper Statements on the Holy Spirit arise in the context of Christ's confessing and redeemed people, they are made coram deo (in the presence of God). So indeed, 'The Holy Spirit is no skeptic, and it is not doubts and mere opinions that he has written in our hearts, but assertions more sure than life itself and all experience' (LW 33, 24). That is because the salvation given in Christ alone (and its concomitant certainty) is what the Spirit 'is on about.' - It is not so surprising therefore to see Luther taking the cues for his teaching of the Spirit straight from the text of the Creed (e.g. pars. 37, 42, 54, 59), almost as though this were the sacred text itself; but it does say something about his understanding of the Spirit's work in the life of the Church and the catholic tradition.

The Reformer affirms holiness as pertaining to the person, but particularly also the work and office of the Holy Spirit. The Creed then gives him the next topic: holy Church. Luther follows through on this, the overall primacy of the Spirit maintained: He uses (par. 53) the Church to sanctify us. But only when Luther can show this whole action as determined by Christ, has he attained the true scope of his witness to the Spirit: 'he first leads us into his holy community, placing us upon the bosom of the church, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ' (par. 37).<sup>20</sup> The order of topics (Church, forgiveness, eternal life) is given by the Creed, Luther can work with it, but now, with the mention of Christ, takes the opportunity to interpose a whole paragraph (38f) to show that to sanctify means to bring us to Christ; the Word ('the truly holy thing,...the treasure that sanctifies all

things.' Tappert, ed., The Book of Concord, 377) appears here as the dominant new category (cf. Augsburg Confession, Art. 5), and the Church is not explicitly mentioned. - We see the whole line of thought repeated in summary (pars. 40-42) with a further step added: the Spirit's preaching has effects involving cooperative responses by the enlightened ('they grasp and accept it, cling..., persevere...'). How critical and decisive the 'solus Christus' <21> remains to Luther's vision of Spirit and Church appears by contract wherever 'our works and merits' are seen as making us 'acceptable' to God. This mistake and departure of faith, occurring also in ecclesial dimensions, is tantamount to the removal of Word, Spirit, Christ and Church, and to the takeover of 'men and evil spirits' (par. 44f). Luther thought he knew the reality of this antichurch situation under the papacy.

It says much, in view of this, about the understanding of the Creator Spirit by the Reformer that he did not abandon the Church and join the 'radicals', the enlightened few, the 'elect'. Why not? Because there the 'holiness' of this article is not understood! To the Church belongs true holiness; so do unity and variety (of gifts), and so do those who are incorporated by the Spirit's leading and preaching (par. 51f). There is an 'outside' to this holy community, and a 'before'; but inside the eternal kingdom of God opens; here the abiding Spirit is sovereignly active and deals with sin ('we are never without sin, par. 54) not in the mode of man, making good, meriting grace, working his way upward - but by communicating the forgiveness of Christ (by the calling Word, into the Church); and He brings Christ to us (by the forgiving Word, in the Church); and this constitutes our ongoing, growing sanctification <22> and the holiness of the Church. The holiness of forgiveness (or the putting down of the flesh) is the only holiness of the Church. <23> Other ways of dealing with sin exclude one from the Church still waiting for the end. <24>

All this Luther sees in the trinitarian embrace of divine love by which the Father 'brings us to himself' (par. 64); the fatherly love is mirrored in the Son, whom the Spirit reveals. This revelation constitutes the unique, saving knowledge of the God who makes Himself present in pure grace, thereby setting us right with Himself and with each other (pars. 68, 55). So Luther teaches salvation in trinitarian terms. At the same time the confession of the essential divinity of Christ and the Spirit is grounded in their soteriological roles. <25> Many statements leave no doubt that Luther, though always speaking first of the wondrous works of God (and most especially so in explaining the Creed, - 'He created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us', part. 64), is well aware of the daily struggle of Christian existence. His opponents, papists as well as the 'fanatics', but also his own experience kept him in touch with the dull earthly soil to which comes down the heavenly Creator Spirit. Sanctification is securely founded in forgiveness won by Christ, and preached and applied by the Spirit. Sin is not therewith simply removed as both Romans and 'fanatics' said in their different ways. Yet the Reformer is at pains to declare that sin can no longer do as it would where the Holy Spirit is bestowed, indeed he can almost adopt the position of his enthusiast opponents, as in the Smalcald Articles (II, 3; Tappert, ed., 310): 'If sin does what it wishes, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present.' The distinction between 'the sin which reigns' and that which 'is reigned over' may indicate the front line of ongoing conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. It also signals liberation from the powers in the present. Writings on Romans 8:2 against Latomus as early as 1521 the Reformer asked:

'But what did the Spirit do? He has not yet freed us from death and sin, for we still must die, we still must labor under sin; but in the end He will free us. Yet He has already liberated us from the law of sin and death, that is, from the kingdom and tyranny of sin and death. Sin is indeed present, but having lost its tyrannic power, it can do nothing; death indeed impends, but having lost its sting, it can neither harm nor terrify' (LW 32, 207 and 213).

#### 4. Why means matter

Landing heavenly gifts on earthly shores is fraught with difficulties and danger. Salvation once won by Christ has to be transported to sinners now. The Spirit has taken the task in hand. This task involves the bridge from heaven to earth, the distance from the revelation in history to the present, the opposition by those born after Adam's fall, their ignorance and failure to recognize or appreciate the treasure once landed, opened and presented. To cope with all this, or - 'In order that we may obtain this faith, God...' made a whole series of provisions, to cite Melancthon in the Augsburg Confession (Article 5), and these are the special province of the Spirit. In the 1528 Confession concerning Christ's Supper Luther described the work of the Spirit which defines our existence as Christians a) in terms of content (as in the Catechism, applying Christ's reconciling action to us) and b) in terms of mode and method:

The Spirit works 'both inwardly and outwardly - inwardly by means of faith and other spiritual gifts, outwardly through the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar, through which as through three means or methods he comes to us and inculcates the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of our salvation' (LW 37, 366).

The relation of this to the well known text from the Smalcald Articles, of a decade later, with its emphasis on 'the outer Word' (preaching, Scripture, the sacraments) is obvious. There is no Divine Being, no Holy Spirit whom it could be salutary for us to encounter apart from the humble, down to earth 'means of grace'. It becomes clear how important are the 'objective' actions of preaching and hearing, of celebrating and receiving the sacraments if we are to grasp Luther's concept of the Holy Spirit aright.

In the Smalcald Articles text (1538) it would appear that the whole battle of Luther for the Gospel against the Roman papacy as well as the Enthusiasts is at issue on this point. Indeed, the teaching of the Spirit is a hazardous affair. For if by the Spirit we mean something higher or deeper than grace on the ground, we are in Luther's view opening up to 'the devil' (par. 10). Criteria by which to distinguish the One from the other, once found, would understandably be infinitely precious and worth maintaining even in the face of... all religion! Breathtaking is the alignment, under these auspices, of papacy, Enthusiasts and Mohammed, of Münzer with Adam and Eve, - and salutary the reminder that we are all prone to fall into 'enthusiasm'. Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen has shown the hermeneutic position of the humanists and Erasmus' reference to the teaching office and church tradition to determine the meaning of Scripture as coming under the same judgment; and K.D. Schmidt reminds readers how strongly Luther disapproves of Bullinger's parallelism: 'Man preaches, threatens, comforts, baptizes, - and the Holy Spirit effects (all these)'. <26>

We ask: what does the marriage of the heavenly Spirit to earthly instruments mean for Luther's concept of God and the Spirit, and what does it tell about the earthly, churchly means of grace?

1. It indicated that the chosen, earthly means of grace come laden with God's goodness. This is to be articulated in several dimensions: -

a) the infinite, saving God Himself has graciously entered our finitude, not anywhere and everywhere, but at these appointed resorts, - which is in keeping with His incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. 'Wo das Wort ist, da tappe nach' ('Where the Word is, there keep tapping') <27>

b) the real presence of Christ in the very humanity of His body and blood in the Holy Supper is to be maintained despite the difficulties of our reason to comprehend the ubiquity of His human nature;

c) the Paraclete is not kept at a distance from His needy client by a dualist separation of spirit and matter. 'To Luther the Spirit is not "something spiritual"', writes Prenter: 'The Spirit is God himself in his real presence as our sphere of life.' <28> Luther's decisive retort to Carlstadt, as to Zwingli therefore reads:

'...all is spirit, spiritual, and an object of the Spirit, in reality and name, which comes from the Holy Spirit, be it as physical or material, outward or visible as it may; on the other hand, all is flesh and fleshly which comes from the natural power of the flesh, without spirit, be it as inward and invisible as it may' (LW 37, 99).

2. The non-divorce of Spirit and external means affirms that the Almighty God who had come to earth is non other than the One Incarnate in Jesus, that in Him the otherwise hidden, fearful, perfect Lord has stepped out among us as the gracious neighbour. The fact that the good Spirit is not available nor accessible apart from the external Word means that we are not saved by some hidden, secret, higher message made known perhaps only to an elite, charismatically or otherwise qualified or trained, for, as the Reformer in 1525 challenged 'the king of humanists', Erasmus:

'what sublimer thing can remain hidden in the Scriptures, now that the seals have been broken, the stone rolled from the door of the sepulcher, and the supreme mystery brought to light, namely, that Christ the Son of God has been made man that God is three and one, that Christ has suffered for us and is to reign eternally? (LW 33, 25f).

The externality of the means points to the facticity, priority and earthly reality of God's action for us in the incarnation and redemption. And the Spirit provides no alternative thereto, opens no way past the particularity and pain of that divine decision and deed, no avoidance of the 'external and alien righteousness of Calvary for us:...whoever does not find or receive God in Christ shall nevermore and nowhere have or find God outside Christ, even though he should go beyond heaven, below hell, or outside of the world', we are warned in The Three Symbols (1538; LW 34, 207). What the Spirit does now is to reveal the work of Christ performed extra nos (outside of us) as done pro nobis (for us) and to bring and impress it in nos (into us!).

So, through His instruments, the Spirit gives us all. He alone creates faith in Christ, an action which we only recognize in faith, so that the Reformer can also say that faith 'brings with it the Holy Spirit' who sanctifies us, fills us with all the fulness of God (indeed, Luther can even preach 'divinization')<sup><29></sup> and produces the good works that benefit the neighbour. What is said of faith in the famous Bible Preface to Romans (1522) is thus rightly said of the Spirit:

'O it is a living, busy, active mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly... Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. '...And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith.' (LW 35, 270f).

Luther's teaching of Spirit and Word and sacraments as bonded wants to prevent God's chosen way in Christ to us being made problematic after all, as would Zwingli's view of the eucharistic presence, as would the Anabaptist denial of baptism to infants. Remove the sheer Spirit-given, Word-proclaimed grace from the sacrament and this becomes a work, a sacrifice, an idol requiring what we cannot give.<sup><30></sup>

'Luther says that the enthusiasts do not teach how the Spirit comes to us but how we may come to the Spirit...The outward Word and the sacraments are the bridge or the ladder on which the Spirit comes down to us. But he who intends to work himself up to the Spirit has naturally no interest in a way which leads from heaven downward'.<sup><31></sup>

Some would doubt whether this gives the Spirit His divine dues. It should therefore be emphasized that Luther maintains the sovereignty and power of the Holy Spirit who is God and Lord.<sup><32></sup> Most famous - and fundamental - is his statement in *De servo arbitrio* (1525): 'God and the Scripture of God are two things, no less than the Creator and the creature are two things' (LW 33,25). The Holy Spirit is not the servant of an *ex opere operato* view of the means of grace and their efficacy. He indeed works faith in those who hear the Gospel, 'when and where God wills' (Augsburg Confession, article 5) - a phrase Melancthon could find in a number of Luther's treatises. Only under this proviso of the Spirit's divine freedom can the recent assessment of Luther's pneumatology by Papandreou stand:

'The Holy Spirit does nothing as of Himself - neither in the Church nor in the hearts of the faithful. Only when the Word of God is preached and heard does the Holy Spirit create the receptivity in the hearts of the faithful. Only in this sense does the Spirit cooperate in the sanctification of men; sanctification however comes from the Word. The fact that the Holy Spirit is bound to the Word, that both really form an indissoluble unity, signifies that the redemption of man is bound to the human life of Jesus Christ. The Church is not granted a salvation - mediatorial role; the Holy Spirit has, since the time of the apostles, ceased to work directly'.<sup><33></sup>

This summary is correct in face of the temptation to 'enthusiasm'; for other situations Luther's conception may be differently nuanced, as in the Catechism. It is also true that the Church is not the important topic in the Wittenbergian's Pentecost preaching.<sup><34></sup> Yet the preached Gospel, the Spirit, the Church - in Luther each presupposes the other,

and wherever this round of topics is touched (one could include justification and faith as well), all of them at once attain thematic importance, as Schwarzwälder has finely observed.<35>

Though the Holy Spirit was at work with Israel under the old covenant, and though He leads us to the recognition of sin, His office is to encourage, console, empower and rule in Christians and the Church under the cross.<36> For, after Sinai, Pentecost is the second public sermon of God from heaven. The two represent law and Gospel (LW 35, 161f). This constant topos in Luther's homilies does not make the Spirit a metaphor for the Gospel and its effects on believers - faith, new courage, love etc. The Spirit remains the subject. God and Lord, distinct from His faithful people, distinct from His gifts and graces, <37> God ready to begin anew, prepared to hear and help us. 'Come Creator Spirit!'.</p>
</div>



FOOTNOTES  
OF LECTURE BY MAURICE SCHILD

- <1> R.W. Jensen, Christian Dogmatics (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) Vol. 2, 105.
- <2> Luther's Works, American Edition (hereafter LW) 53, 265.
- <3> Hinführung zu Luther (Mainz: Grünewald, 1982, 2. ed. 1983) 211.
- <4> W.-D. Hauschild, article 'Geist', Theologische Realenzyklopädie (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976ff) vol. 12, 207, 477. Literature on our topic is not plentiful; listings are found at the end of Hauschild's article, at 217, 27-60, and by Schwarzwälder (see footnote 9 below), LWJ 38 (1971) 26.
- <5> Jan Koopmans, Das altkirchliche Dogma in der Reformation (München: Kaiser, 1955) 112. Also: 'Die Reformatoren sind die Ersten gewesen, die das Dogma vom Geist zu seinem vollen Recht kommen liessen' (ibid 114; my transl.: The Reformers were the first to give its fullright to the dogma of the Spirit). That the doctrine on the Spirit had not been completed before the collapse of the Roman Empire has been emphasized by Herman Sasse, In Statu Confessionis (Berlin: Die Spur, 1976) vol. 2, 305.
- <6> LW 11, 497.
- <7> LW 10, 4.
- <8> Cf. also the 1519 Galatians lectures, e.g. at LW 27, 320 and the 1521 Answer to Emser where he cites Augustine as saying: 'The letter is nothing but LAW WITHOUT GRACE.' We, Luther continues '...may say that the Spirit is nothing but GRACE WITHOUT LAW. Wherever the letter is, or the law without grace, there is no end to making laws, to teaching and to works.' (LW 39, 189).
- <9> 'Die Trinitätslehre in der reformatorischen Christenheit', ThLZ 94 (1969) 568. See also LW 24, 117. How closely the 'divine facts' and our faith in them belong together emerges in the introductory paragraphs to the Creed in the Personal Prayer Book (1522), where the Reformer writes: 'So the little word in is well chosen and should be noted carefully; we do not say, I believe God the Father, or I believe about the Father, but rather, I believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. And this faith is given only by God himself and through it we confess the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, thus believing in the Holy Spirit just as we do in the Father. And just as there is one faith in three Persons so the three Persons are one God.' (LW 43, 25; WA 10, 1, 24, 1ff cited by Klaus Schwarzwälder, 'Delectari assertionibus. Zur Struktur von Luthers Pneumatologie', LWJ 38 (1971) 55 n. 134).
- <10> Luther. An Introduction to his Thought (London: Collins, Fontana pb. 1975) 106.
- <11> Hauschild, op. cit. 12, 209, 48.

<12> LW 34, 24.

<13> Schwarzwälder, op. cit., 29.

<14> See LW 27, 363f; 26, 288; WA 22, 135, 37-39.

<15> The Book of Concord, Tappert ed., 416 (par. 43f).

<16> WA 22, 139, 2-4.

<17> WA 22, 137, 37.

<18> LW 24, 115; cf. also 111 and 116f.

<19> LW 43, 211.

<20> Luther, who can elsewhere speak of 'fine Easter preachers' but 'very poor Pentecost preachers' (LW 41, 114), certainly does distinguish between the present kingly work of Christ in the Church and the renewing action of the Holy Spirit: Ecclesia, however, should mean the holy Christian people, not only of the days of the apostles, who are long since dead, but to the end of the world, so that there is always a holy Christian people on earth, in whom Christ lives, works, and rules, per redemptionem, "through grace and the remission of sin", and the Holy Spirit, per vivificationem et sanctificationem, "through daily purging of sin and renewal of life," so that we do not remain in sin but are enabled and obliged to lead a new life, abounding in all kinds of good works,...' (ibid 144). All the more striking is the interpretation of actions (and persons!) in a passage from the Personal Prayer Book: 'Working through the Spirit, Father and Son stir, awaken, call, and beget new life in me and in all who are his. Thus the Spirit in and through Christ quickens, sanctifies, and awakens the spirit in us and brings us to the Father, by whom the Spirit is active and life-giving everywhere.' (LW 53, 264).

<21> In the second verse of his 'Now let us pray to the Holy Ghost' (1524): 'Teach us to know Jesus Christ alone' (LW 53, 264).

<22> On the nature of this the first of the Ninety-Five Theses demands consideration, together with the passage from the Smalcald Articles (III, 3 par. 40, Tappert, ed., 309): 'In the case of a Christian such repentance continues until death, for all through life it contends with the sins that remain in the flesh. As St. Paul testifies in Rom. 7:23, he wars with the law in his members and he does this not with his own powers but with the gift of the Holy Spirit which follows the forgiveness of sins. This gift daily cleanses and expels the sins that remain and enables man to become truly pure and holy.' See also LW 41, 143f.

<23> 'Before God this alone is religion: the forgiveness of sins.' (Lectures on Isaiah, 1527-30; LW 17, 112f).

<24> In the Catechism sermon Luther gave vent to the critical force of his conviction at this point by asserting: 'The clerics are outside the church, because they want to be saved through their works' (LW 51, 167).

<25> See Reiner Jansen: Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre (Frankfurt: Lang, 1976) 188. For patristic background to our topic, see G.R. Priebbenow, 'The Holy Spirit in the Cappadocians and John of Damascus',

Lutheran Theological Journal, 10 (Adelaide, 1976) 17-20; noteworthy in our context is the statement on p.19 in resumé of thoughts of Basil: 'Our mind, enlightened by the Spirit, looks to the Son, and in him, as in an image, beholds the Father.'

<26> In Nos Extra Nos (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972) 263f. K.D. Schmidt, 'Luthers Lehre vom Hl. Geist', Gesammelte Aufsätze (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967) 119.

<27> WA 19, 492, 19f. See Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther. Gestalt und Wirkungen (Güterloh: Mohn, 1975) 150-157, on the Word as Spirit.

<28> In Spiritus Creator (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1953) 288.

<29> In a 1525 sermon on Eph. 3:14-19 (WA 17, I, 438, 11ff).

<30> WA 28, 573f.

<31> Prenter, op. cit., 254. Luther states that the enthusiasts say: '"You must have the Spirit"; but how I can get the Spirit they do not say' (WA 28, 576, 14f.)

<32> LW 34, 217 and WA 10, 1, 2, 297, 18-24. Cf. Hauschild's sentence: 'Er bleibt in der Bindung an das Wort frei' (TRE 12, 209, 44).

<33> 'Martin Luther in orthodoxer Sicht', KuD 30 (1984) 105.

<34> See Gerhard Heintze, 'Luthers Pfingstpredigten', LuJ 34 (1967) 140.

<35> Op. cit. 35f.

<36> W. von Loewenich, 'Luthers Auslegung der Pfingstgeschichte'. In: Vierhundertfünfzig Jahre lutherische Reformation 1517-1967 (Festschrift für Franz Lau, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967) 185.

<37> Heintze, op. cit. 139.

EXCERPTS FROM SMALCALD ARTICLES AND LARGE CATECHISM

-312-

SMALCALD ARTICLES

which, how great, and how many our sins are. As it is written, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for no man living is righteous before thee" (Ps. 143:2), and Paul also says in I Cor. 4:4, "I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted."

3

VIII. CONFESSION

Since absolution or the power of the keys, which was instituted by Christ in the Gospel, is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church, especially for the sake of timid consciences and for the sake of untrained young people who need to be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine.

1

However, the enumeration of sins should be left free to everybody to do or not as he will. As long as we are in the flesh we shall not be untruthful if we say, "I am a poor man, full of sin. I see in my members another law," etc. (Rom. 7:23). Although private absolution is derived from the office of the keys, it should not be neglected; on the contrary, it should be highly esteemed and valued, like all other functions of the Christian church.

2

In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts--that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure. Münzer <7> did this, and many still do it in our day who wish to distinguish sharply between the letter and the spirit without knowing what they say or teach. The papacy, too, is nothing but enthusiasm, for the pope boasts that "all laws are in the shrine of his heart," <8> and he claims that whatever he decides and commands in his churches is spirit and law, even when it is above and contrary to the Scriptures or spoken Word. All this is the old devil and the old serpent who made enthusiasts of Adam and Eve. He led them from the external Word of God to spiritualizing and to their own imaginations, and he did this through other external words. Even so, the enthusiasts of our day condemn the external Word, yet they do not remain silent but fill the world with their chattering and scribbling, as if the Spirit could not come through the Scriptures or the spoken word of the apostles but must come through their own writings and words. Why do they not stop preaching and writing until the Spirit himself comes to the people without and before their writings since they boast that the Spirit came upon them without the testimony of the Scriptures? <9> There is no time to dispute further about these matters. After all, we have treated them sufficiently elsewhere. <1>

3

4

5

Even those who have come to faith before they were baptized and those 7  
 who came to faith in Baptism came to their faith through the external  
 Word which preceded. Adults who have attained the age of reason must  
 first have heard, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved"  
 (Mark 16:16), even if they did not at once believe and did not receive  
 the Spirit and Baptism until ten years later. Cornelius (Acts 10:1ff) 8  
 had long since heard from the Jews about the coming Messiah through  
 whom he was justified before God, and his prayers and alms were  
 acceptable to God in this faith (Luke calls him "devout" and "God-  
 fearing"),<sup><2></sup> but he could not have believed and been justified if the  
 Word and his hearing of it had not preceded. However, St. Peter had to  
 reveal to him that the Messiah, in whose coming he had previously  
 believed, had already come, and his faith concerning the coming  
 Messiah did not hold him captive with the hardened, unbelieving Jews,  
 but he knew that he now had to be saved by the present Messiah and  
 not deny or persecute him as the Jews did.

In short, enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the 9  
 beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and  
 inoculated in man by the old dragon, and it is the source, strength,  
 and power of all heresy, including that of the papacy and Mohammedism.  
 Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not 10  
 deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever  
 is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of  
 the devil. For even to Moses God wished to appear first through 11  
 the burning bush and the spoken word,<sup><3></sup> and no prophet, whether  
 Elijah or Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments.  
 John the Baptist was not conceived without the preceding word of 12  
 Gabriel, nor did he leap in his mother's womb until Mary spoke.<sup><4></sup> 13  
 St. Peter says that when the prophets spoke, they did not prophesy  
 by the impulse of man but were moved by the Holy Spirit, yet as holy  
 men of God.<sup><5></sup> But without the external Word they were not holy, and  
 the Holy Spirit would not have moved them to speak while they were  
 still unholy. They were holy, St. Peter says, because the Holy Spirit  
 spoke through them.

<7> Thomas Münzer.

<8> Corpus juris canonici, Book VI, 1,2, c.1.

<9> Literally: without the preaching of the Scriptures.

<1> E.g., Luther's "Against the Heavenly Prophets" (1525)

<2> Cf. Acts 10:2,22.

<3> Cf. Ex. 3:2,4.

<4> Cf. Luke 1:13-42.

<5> II Peter 1:21.

#### LARGE CATECHISM

are redeemed. We shall concentrate on these words, "in Jesus Christ,  
 our Lord."

If you are asked, "What do you believe in the Second Article, concerning Jesus Christ?" answer briefly, "I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my Lord." What is it to "become a Lord"? It means that he has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all evil. Before this I had no Lord and King, but was captive under the power of the devil. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness. 27

When we were created by God the Father, and had received from him all kinds of good things, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil. We lay under God's wrath and displeasure, doomed to eternal damnation, as we had deserved. There was no counsel, no help, no comfort for us until this only and eternal Son of God, in his unfathomable goodness, had mercy on our misery and wretchedness and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers now have been routed, and their place has been taken by Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and righteousness and every good and blessing. He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father's favor and grace. He has taken us as his own, under his protection, in order that he may rule us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life and blessedness.

Let this be the summary of this article, that the little word "Lord" simply means the same as Redeemer, that is, he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and now keeps us safe there. The remaining parts of this article simply serve to clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished--that is, how much it cost Christ and what he paid and risked in order to win us and bring us under his dominion. That is to say, he became man, conceived and born without sin, of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, that he might become Lord over sin; moreover, he suffered, died, and was buried that he might make satisfaction for me and pay what I owed, not with silver and gold but with his own precious blood. All this in order to become my Lord. For he did none of these things for himself, nor had he any need of them. Afterward he rose again from the dead, swallowed up and devoured death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed dominion at the right hand of the Father. The devil and all powers, therefore, must be subject to him and lie beneath his feet until finally, at the last day, he will completely divide and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, sin, etc. 1

But the proper place to explain all these different points is not the brief children's sermons, but rather the longer sermons throughout the year, especially at the times appointed for dealing at length with such articles as the birth, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. 32

Indeed, the entire Gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article. Upon it all our salvation and blessedness are based, and it is so rich and broad we can never learn it fully. 33

### THE THIRD ARTICLE

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen." 34

To this article, as I have said, I cannot give a better title than 35  
 "Sanctification." In it is expressed and portrayed the Holy Spirit and  
 his office, which is that he makes us holy. Therefore, we must concen-  
 trate on the term "Holy Spirit", because it is so precise that we can  
 find no substitute for it. Many other kinds of spirits are mentioned 36  
 in the Scriptures, such as the spirit of man, <3> heavenly spirits <4>  
 and the evil spirit. <5> But God's Spirit alone is called Holy Spirit,  
 that is, he who has sanctified and still sanctifies us. As the Father  
 is called Creator and the Son is called Redeemer, so on account of his  
 work the Holy Spirit must be called Sanctifier, the One who makes holy.  
 How does this sanctifying take place? Answer: Just as the resurrection, 37  
 etc. so the Holy Spirit effects our sanctification through the  
 following: the communion of saints or Christian church, the forgiveness  
 of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. In  
 other words, he first leads us into his holy community, placing us upon  
 the bosom of the church, where he preaches to us and brings us to  
 Christ.

Neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe 38  
 in him and take him as our Lord, unless these were first offered to  
 us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the Gospel by  
 the Holy Spirit. The work is finished and completed, Christ has acquired  
 and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death and resurrection,  
 etc. But if the work remained hidden and no one knew of it, it would  
 have been all in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might  
 not be buried but put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be  
 published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to  
 offer and apply to us this treasure of salvation. Therefore to sanctify  
 is nothing else than to bring us to the Lord Christ to receive this 39  
 blessing, which we could not obtain by ourselves.

Learn this article, then, as clearly as possible. If you are asked, 40  
 What do you mean by the words, "I believe in the Holy Spirit"? You can  
 answer, "I believe that the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as his name  
 implies." How does he do this? By what means? Answer: "Through the 41  
 Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the  
 body, and the life everlasting." In the first place, he has a unique  
 community in the world. It is the mother that begets and bears every 42  
 Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and  
 preaches that Word, and by it he illumines and kindles hearts so that  
 they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.

Where he does not cause the Word to be preached and does not awaken 43  
 understanding in the heart, all is lost. This was the case under the  
 papacy, where faith was entirely shoved under the bench and no one  
 recognized Christ as the Lord, or the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier.  
 That is, no one believed that Christ is our Lord in the sense that he  
 won for us this treasure without our works and merits and made us  
 acceptable to the Father. What was lacking here? There was no Holy 44  
 Spirit present to reveal this truth and have it preached. Men and  
 evil spirits there were, teaching us to obtain grace and be saved by  
 our works. Therefore there was no Christian church. For where Christ 45  
 is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather  
 the Christian church, and outside it no one can come to the Lord Christ.  
 Let this suffice concerning the substance of this article. But since 46  
 various points in it are not quite clear to the common people, we shall  
 run through them also.

The Creed calls the holy Christian church a *communio sanctorum*, "a 47  
 communion of saints." Both expressions have the same meaning. In early

times the latter phrase was missing,<6> and it is unintelligible in our translation. If it is to be rendered idiomatically, we must express it quite differently. The word ecclesia properly means an assembly. We, however, are accustomed to the term Kirche, "church", by which 48 simple folk understand not a group of people but a consecrated house or building. But the house should not be called a church except for the single reason that the group of people assembles there. For we who assemble select a special place and give the house its name by virtue of the assembly. Thus the word "church" (Kirche) really means nothing else than a common assembly; it is not of German but of Greek origin, like the word ecclesia. In that language the word is kyria, and in Latin curia.<7> In our mother tongue therefore it ought to be called "a Christian congregation or assembly,"<8> or best and most clearly of all, "a holy Christian people."<9>

Likewise the word communio, which is appended, should not be trans- 49 lated "communion" but "community".<1> It is nothing but a comment or interpretation by which someone wished to explain what the Christian church is. But some among us, who understand neither Latin nor German, have rendered this "communion of saints", although no German would use or understand such an expression. To speak idiomatically, we ought to say "a community of saints," that is, a community composed only of saints, or, still more clearly, "a holy community." This I say in order that the expression may be under- 50 stood; it has become so established in usage that it cannot well be uprooted, and it would be next to heresy to alter a word.

This is the sum and substance of this phrase: I believe that 51 there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part 52 and member, a participant and copartner<2> in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word, which is the first step in entering it. Before we had advanced this far, we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Until the last day the Holy Spirit remains with the holy community 53 or Christian people. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit.

Further we believe that in this Christian church we have the 54 forgiveness of sins, which is granted through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire Gospel. Toward forgiveness is directed everything that is to be preached concerning the sacraments and, in short, the entire Gospel and all the duties of Christianity. Forgiveness is needed constantly, for although God's grace has been won by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet because we are encumbered with our flesh we are never without sin.

Therefore everything in the Christian church is so ordered that we may 55 daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and through signs <3> appointed to comfort and revive our consciences as long as we live. Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are in the Christian church, where there is full forgiveness of sin. God forgives us, and we forgive, bear with, and



aid one another.

But outside the Christian church (that is, where the Gospel is not) 56  
there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness. Therefore, all who  
seek to merit holiness through their works rather than through the  
Gospel and the forgiveness of sin have expelled and separated them-  
selves from the church.

Meanwhile, since holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the  
time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its  
uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and  
perfect holiness in a new, eternal life. Now we are only halfway pure  
and holy. The Holy Spirit must continue to work in us through the Word,  
daily granting forgiveness until we attain to that life where there  
will be no more forgiveness. In that life are only perfectly pure and  
holy people, full of goodness and righteousness, completely freed from  
sin, death and all evil, living in new, immortal and glorified bodies.

All this, then, is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, to begin  
and daily to increase holiness on earth through these two means, the  
Christian church and the forgiveness of sins. Then, when we pass from  
this life, he will instantly perfect our holiness and will eternally  
preserve us in it by means of the last two parts of this article.

The term "resurrection of the flesh," however, is not well chosen.  
When we Germans hear the word Fleisch (flesh), we think no farther  
than the butcher shop. Idiomatically we would say "resurrection of the  
body." <4> However, this is not of great importance, as long as the  
words are rightly understood.

#### CREED

This, then, is the article which must always remain in force. 61  
Creation is past and redemption is accomplished, but the Holy Spirit  
carries on his work unceasingly until the last day. For this purpose  
he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and  
does all his work. For he has not yet gathered together all his 62  
Christian people, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness.  
Therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into this community  
through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through  
the same Word and the forgiveness of sins. Then when his work has  
been finished and we abide in it, having died to the world and all  
evil, he will finally make us perfectly and eternally holy. We now  
wait in faith for this to be accomplished through the Word.

Here in the Creed you have the entire essence of God, his will, and 63  
his work exquisitely depicted in very short but rich words. In them  
consists all our wisdom, which surpasses all the wisdom, understanding,  
and reason of men. Although the whole world has sought painstakingly  
to learn what God is and what he thinks and does, yet it has never  
succeeded in the least. But here you have everything in richest measure.  
In these three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the  
most profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer, unutterable love.  
He created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us.  
Moreover, having bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth,  
he has given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us  
to himself. As we explained before, we could never come to recognize  
the Father's favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a  
mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry  
and terrible Judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it

not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.

These articles of the Creed, therefore, divide and distinguish us Christians from all other people on earth. All who are outside the Christian church, whether heathen, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites, even though they believe in and worship only the one, true God, nevertheless do not know what his attitude is toward them. They cannot be confident of his love and blessing. Therefore they remain in eternal wrath and damnation, for they do not have the Lord Christ, and, besides, they are not illuminated and blessed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Now you see that the Creed is a very different teaching from the Ten Commandments. The latter teaches us what we ought to do; the Creed tells what God does for us and gives to us. The Ten Commandments, moreover, are inscribed in the hearts of all men.<5>

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<1> Cf. Isa. 25:8

<2> Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ascension

<3> E.g., I Cor.2:11

<4> Cf. II Macc. 11:6, 15:23. Luther interpreted these as the good angels.

<5> Cf. I Sam. 16:14, 23; Tobit 3:8; Acts 19:12, 15.

<6> In 1519 Luther expressed the opinion that the expression "communion of saints" was a late addition to the Creed, in apposition to "holy catholic Church" (WA, 2:190). The earliest existent version of the Creed containing the phrase is that attributed to Bishop Nicetas of Remesiana (ca. 400?).

<7> Luther was mistaken. Kirche comes not from the Greek kyria or kyriake but from the Celtic word kyrk (the circumscribed), related to the Latin circus and carcer. Again, curia is related not to the Greek kyria but to Quiris (Roman citizen).

<8> Eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung. In the Bible Luther always translated ekklesia with Gemeinde (cf. Matt. 16:18; Acts 19:39f.; I Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2).

<9> Eine heilige Christenheit. In the treatise, "On the Councils and the Churches" (1539), Luther urged substitution of Christenheit or christliches Volk for the "un-German" and "blind" word Kirche. W.A., 50:624f.

<1> Not Gemeinschaft but Gemeinde.

<2> Cf. I Cor. 1:9

<3> The sacraments.

<4> Auferstehung des Leibs oder Leichnams. In the early church, the word sarkos (flesh) apparently was inserted deliberately to combat the Gnostic tendency to assert that only the "spirit" was capable of being saved, that the body or flesh was by nature evil. In his exposition of John 1:14 (WA 101:235) Luther wrote: "By 'flesh' we should understand the whole human nature, body and soul, in the manner of the Scriptures, which call man 'flesh,'...and in the Creed we say, 'I believe in the resurrection of the flesh,' i.e., 'of all men.'"

Older English translations of the Creed also read "resurrection of the flesh" until 1543, when in "The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man," issued by Henry VIII, "resurrection of the body" was introduced.

<5> Cf. Rom. 2:15. Luther was thinking of the natural law. See also above, Third Commandment, 82, and footnote.

The Work of the Holy Spirit and the Charismatic Movements,  
from Luther's Perspective

Dr. Won Yong Ji

(This essay, under an assigned topic "The Work of the Holy Spirit and Charismatic Movement, from Luther's Perspective," has been prepared with the understanding that there would be a speaker who presents another essay on "Luther's concept of the Holy Spirit" to the same consultation. I have tried to avoid unnecessary repetition, even though such repetition is sometimes unavoidable in order to be faithful to the topic given to me. The source of materials consulted is indicated in the respective reference notes in the essay. For this reason, I believe, a separate bibliography is not necessary.)

The essay is presented in the following sequence of thoughts:

1. Pneumatology: Introductory Remarks
2. The Work of the Holy Spirit
3. Charismatic Movements Today
4. "Experience" in Christian Life
5. Luther's "Theology of Cross" and "Experience"
6. Viable Alternatives and Suggestions in Asian Context

1. Pneumatology: Introductory Remark

Pneumatology in Christian theology, which deals with the place and work of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is one of the widely discussed points in modern theological circles. Special attention was given to the Holy Spirit during the third quarter of the 20th century, and it peaked in the '70s, evidenced in a flood of publications on this subject. Until that time, however, according to some observers, Christian theology had faced an "akuten Geistvergessenheit" and theologians used to refer to the Holy Spirit as "the Divine Unknown."<sup>1</sup> For centuries theology has been busy with the Second Article; and the Pentecost experience of salvation was

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<sup>1</sup>O.A. Dilschneider, "Der Geist fuehrt in die Wahrheit," Evangelische Kommentar, 1973, H. 6, S. 333f. Cf. Yves Congar (Fr. RC), I Believe in the Holy Spirit, I. Frederick Dale Bruner's book, A Theology of the Holy Spirit (Eerdmans, 1974 -- fourth printing) contains a very comprehensive Bibliography (31 pp.), materials related to the Holy Spirit in English and some in German. Cf. Lorenz Wunderlich, The Half-Known God, CPH, 1963. During 1970s, "experience" has been a dominant theme in many parts of the world. Inner spiritual development was stressed rather than social concerns like in the 1960s. Also see the classic study of Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the controversy with the anti-sacramental enthusiasts: Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator, Muhlenberg Press, 1953.

frequently in a forgotten state. Dilschneider was pleading against any false Christocentrism for a theology of the Spirit. Already at the beginning of this century, John Nicholas Lenker made this significant observation:

It is the development of Luther's explanation of the third article of the Creed in the small Catechism, a theme dear to Protestants and worthy of more study in our materialistic age and country. While we have clear and definite ideas of the Father and the Son, of creation and redemption, there is a lack of the scriptural knowledge of the Holy Spirit, although we are living in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. It has been well said that the great need of our age and country is a well balanced Christianity... [underline is mine] (Lenker Edition of Luther's Works 1907, Vol. 12 "Foreword," p. 8)

One may say that there is a structural difference between the functions of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ, namely: In Christology, the Logos took the human nature; in Pneumatology, the Logos took not just human nature but also took human function for us. That is to say, the Spirit works not only in us and to us, but essentially always with us "im Sinne von Zusammen mit uns." What we call Stellvertretung (substitution) in Christology, we call Reziprozitaet -- "die theonome Reziprozitaet des Geistes."<sup>2</sup>

The Holy Spirit confronts us in His works. He activates in us that in which He Himself is active. It is a continuation of what Christ has done for us, working in our daily life. Where Christ is, there is His Spirit.<sup>3</sup> In reality, Christ means the "Deus Praesens," whereas the Holy Spirit is the "Christus praesens."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the way of treating 'Pneumatology versus Christology,' and vice versa, is untenable. A theology of Triune God is seriously called for. (Creation, Redemption, Sanctification)

The tendency to deemphasize the work of the Holy Spirit has certainly been a contributing factor in the rise of "independent churches" and sects with their excessive stress on spectacular and emotional things, such as, miracles, signs, and speaking in tongues, with added interest in a personally intensive 'Gemeinschaft'

<sup>2</sup>R. Bohren, Predigtlehre, 1971. S. 65, 70, 75ff.

<sup>3</sup>~~E.R.~~ <sup>1976</sup> Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup>G. Poehlmann, Abris der Dogmatik, 1975, S. 229-30. The Holy Spirit is speaking in the person of Christ. Cf. LW-AE 26:279.

with God and the seeking for evidence of the presence of God through highly emotional religious experiences (by quoting passages like Jn. 14:23; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17).

The Lutheran Church has a significant heritage of Spirit-Theology in its confessional writings, hymns and prayers. Martin Luther himself observed: "Weil denn solches die Biblia, welche des Heiligen Geistes eigen sonderlich Buch, Schrift und Wort ist, ..." <sup>5</sup> These words were added in Luther's Preface (1535) to the book of a friend, Urban Rhegius, which was written to refute the principles set forth by the Anabaptists, largely centering in the denial of the Word as the means of Grace. The confessional fathers, Martin Chemnitz and others, applied to the Holy Spirit and His works such Old Testament passages as Ps. 51:1; Is. 63:10, 11 which had often been neglected with reference to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. <sup>6</sup> The emphases of the basic documents of the Lutheran confessions and the actual practice in the local churches have not always coincided.

## 2. The Work of the Holy Spirit

In brief, the Holy Spirit has two distinct functions: the tasks of the Comforter and the Enabler.

### a. As the "Comforter" (Parakleetos, John 14)

In a Pentecost sermon on John 14:23-31, Luther pointed out that Scripture ascribes to the Holy Spirit the name "Parakleetos" or Comforter. This title "Comforter," (παράκλητος) which appears only 5 times in the N.T. (4 in John's Gospel and 1 in First John), has the same meaning as the Latin advocatus or patronus which refers to the counsel of a person who has been accused, to a person who espouses his cause, who defends him (her), straightens out his affairs, and serves him with aid, admonition and encouragement.

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<sup>5</sup>S.L. 14:349

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Third Article of the Creed in the Large Catechism, and E. Schlink's Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, under "Spirit, Holy."

This [says Jesus Christ in John 14<sup>7</sup>] is to be the office (Amt) of the Holy Spirit after I leave you and you will have no comfort and no assistance in the world. All the world will be against you; and the devil will be at your heels and with his venomous, blasphemous tongue will say the worst about you and will accuse you and decry you before all the world as cheats and rebels. Besides, your own conscience and heart will plague and frighten you with the fear of God's wrath, with sadness and heavy thoughts of your own weakness, so that you well may and must despair if you were to be left without comfort and strength in this predicament.

Thus, Jesus called the Spirit "the Comforter" and ascribed to Him the works of a person saying, for instance, that He is to testify of Christ. Again, Jesus said:

"He shall teach you all things." (Jn. 14:26)

The Holy Spirit is the same true, real, one God, because He is to do works which God alone does, such as enlightening the hearts within ("junwendig erleuchten"), bringing people to true knowledge, beginning, arousing, and strengthening faith in them, comforting consciences and keeping them undismayed against the terror of the devil and all creatures, etc.

b. As the "Enabler" (Lk. 12:12; I Cor. 12:3) (inclusive of "sanctifier," "enlightener," etc.).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to keep the believer under His care. Without the Spirit the hearts of people are either hardened in sin or they despair. But both are contrary to the will of God. "By the Holy Spirit the godly navigate between this (per medium inter hanc) satanic Scylla and Charybdis and cast themselves upon the superabundant and infinite mercy of God. They confess their sins, but at the same time they also confess the immeasurable mercy of God."<sup>9</sup>

Luther remarks in the explanation of the Thrid Article in his Large Catechism that the work of the Spirit of God must be carried on throughout the ages, and for this He has appointed a congregation on earth through which He speaks and does everything.

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<sup>7</sup>WA 21:445f.

<sup>8</sup>In his exposition of John 15:26-37. WA 45:732f.

<sup>9</sup>Scylla is a rock on the coast of Italy across from the whirlpool off the coast of Sicily. The expression "between Scylla and Charybdis" came to mean being between two dangers, either of which is hard to avoid without running into the other. TR 5:576l.

Therefore we believe in Him who through the Word daily brings men into the church and through the same Word and the forgiveness of sin bestows, increases, and strengthens faith, so that when His work is done, and we have continued in it and have died to the world and all evil, He may finally make us perfectly and eternally holy.<sup>10</sup>

c. The Holy Spirit works through "Means" (the Word and the Sacraments)

A story goes like this:

There was a flood. A young man was standing along the street. Water had already reached his feet. A car came along and offered a ride. But he refused saying: "In my prayer God has promised me to offer His helping hand." Water steadily rose up to the level of his chest. A boat approached him and offered assistance. But the young man refused with the same reason. The water came up to his chin. At this crucial moment a rescue helicopter came flying over head, shouting: "Hey, grab this rope tight," lowering a rope ladder. But the young man was mumbling, "God promised help through my prayer," rejecting the most decisive offer. At last, the water swallowed him up, and he died. Upon his arrival at the gate of heaven the young man was met by the Archangel. He said in anger and disgust: "God did not keep His promise to send His helping hand, and I drowned in the water." The angel replied, "Didn't I send you, upon God's order, three different means to help you, a car, a boat and a helicopter? Unwise and stubborn, you consistently rejected them. Go away!

Luther's theology is distinct from the views on the work of the Holy Spirit of the so called "charismatics" (neo-Pentecostals) of our time and the "Schwärmer" of the 16th century who have "swallowed the Holy Spirit, feathers and all," as said Luther. (LW-AE 40:83 and also see footnote 20 of this essay). Martin Luther and his faithful followers would not deny that it is possible for the Holy Spirit to work without, and apart from, the Word. The Spirit could work without "means," if that is His will. In his refutation of "free will" (1525), addressed to Erasmus, Luther granted this possibility. In his sermon on John 3:8 (May 4, 1538) Luther remarked: The Holy Spirit comes when and where He pleases and also gives a person as many gifts as He pleases. "Es wird der heilige Geist mit seinen Gaben nicht aus Menschlichem Willen gegeben, ..." <sup>11</sup> But he contends that it has no practical value for us, who are tied to the Word of God. Luther in his "De servo Arbitrio," 1525, said:

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<sup>10</sup>WA 30 I, 191.

<sup>11</sup>WA 47:31.



He (God) could, of course, do this apart from the Word; but He does not want to do it in that way. And who are we to inquire into the reason for the divine will? It is enough for us to know that God so wills it; and it becomes us to reverence,<sup>12</sup> love, and adore this will and to bridle the impertinence of our reason.

Luther saw God's intention to work through "means," and thus to send His Spirit, illustrated even in the Old Testament. Thus Luther said in his sermon on Ex. 14 in 1525: "God wants to give the Holy Spirit through the word (per verbum), and without the Word He does not want to do it."<sup>13</sup> In a sermon delivered in 1525 on I Tim. 1:3-11 he expressed the same thought: "We must constantly handle, preach, bear, and inculcate the Word until the Holy Ghost comes.... The Word is the only bridge and path (die einige brück und steig) by which the Holy Spirit comes to us."<sup>14</sup> So Christ Himself had said, as Luther remarked in a Pentecost sermon on John 14:23-31:

The Word must precede, or must be spoken first, and thereupon the Holy Spirit works through it. The order, then, must not be reversed and a Holy Spirit dreamed of who comes without the Word and before the Word; but He comes with and through the Word and never goes beyond the Word. (mit und durch das Wort kome und nicht weiter gehe, denn so Weit solch Wort gehet.).<sup>15</sup>

A succinct summary of the work of God through "means" is made in the Smalcald

#### Articles:

... God gives no one His Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before.... God will not deal with us except through his external Word and Sacrament.... For even to Moses God wished to appear first through the burning bush and the spoken word, (Ex. 3:2-4), and no prophet, whether Elijah or Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments.... But without the external Word they were not holy, and the Holy Spirit would not have moved them to speak while they were still unholy.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>WA 18:695.

<sup>13</sup>WA 16:270.

<sup>14</sup>WA 17 I, 125f.

<sup>15</sup>WA 21:469.

<sup>16</sup>S.A. Part III, Art. VIII, 3, 9-13. Also Cf. AC V; FC, Epitome II, 13.

Because of our utter dependence on the Holy Spirit, we would pray as Luther did in the significant Pentecost hymn of 1524: "Komm Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott"<sup>17</sup>

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord,  
With all your graces now outpoured  
On each believer's mind and heart;  
Your fervent love to them impart....

Come, holy Light, guide divine,  
Now cause the Word of life to shine.  
Teach us to know our God aright  
And call him Father with delight....

Come, holy Fire, comfort true,  
Grant us the will your work to do  
And in your service to abide;  
Let trials turn us not aside....

### 3. Charismatic Movements (Neo-Pentecostalism)

The Charismatic Movement, also known as Gifts-movement, Spirit-movement, Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Neo-Pentecostalism, etc., is a distinct and complex phenomenon today in Christendom, transcending denominational lines, both among the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, which penetrates into all phases of church life throughout the world. The Bible uses the word "charismatic" with the root meaning of charis (grace) and the derived meaning of "manifestation of grace" (charisma) especially to describe the "gifts" (charismata) which the Holy Spirit gives in order to manifest Himself for the common good (I Cor. 12:4-11; 7:7; Rom. 6:23; 12:6-8; Gal. 5:22-26; fruits of the Spirit; I Cor. 13:1). The resurgence of neo-Pentecostalism is no accident. It is a sociological phenomenon reflecting our time, its spiritual mood and need, and its direction, similar to the rise of civil rights movements and the feminist movement.<sup>18</sup>

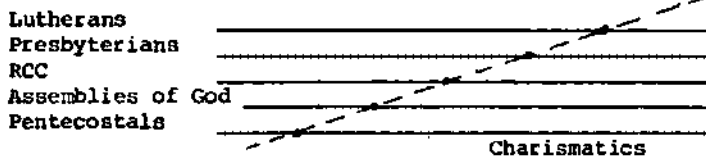
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<sup>17</sup> Lutheran Worship, number 154.

<sup>18</sup> There are many writings on the charismatic movement, the pro and con, in recent years. Among "Lutheran charismatic" writers in the USA are Larry Christenson, Theodore Jungkuntz, Rodney Lensch, Donald Matzat, D. Pfotenhauer, Delbert Rossin. Also cf. D. Scaer's article in Springfielder, Vol. 37, 1974 (?); CTCR Document on "Charismatic Movement," 1977.

Neo-Pentecostalism, from a theological perspective, may be classified as the "second front" of challenge whose core emphasis and chief weapon is 'experience,' usually a significantly emotional experience, or 'experience + feeling = subjectivism' equation.<sup>19</sup> This front of challenge seems to be much more difficult to cope with than the other fronts. The other two fronts may easily be grasped, whereas the second front is much less distinct and less measurable. Unlike the challenges of liberalism and neo-universalism, neo-Pentecostalism is more difficult to categorize. It is, indeed, slippery!

Neo-Pentecostalism has a long ancestry, which includes the old Montanism (old millennialists and ascetics), enthusiasm,<sup>20</sup> subjectivistic tendency of Schleiermacherism, etc. (Lindberg, 299f.) This movement has left its mark on almost all denominations, in various ways and with different degrees of intensity. Indeed, Luther himself had much trouble with his contemporary spiritualists, enthusiasts, and the "Heavenly Prophets" like Karlstadt and his companions. (Cf. "Against Heavenly Prophets in the matter of Images and Sacraments," LW-AE 40:73-223) A diagrammatic example:



<sup>19</sup>The "First front" of challenge: Liberal theology with 'reason + feeling = rationalism' equation; the "third front" of challenge: neo-universalism (syncretism). On the charismatic efforts and Luther and the Lutherans, I recommend the work of Carter Lindberg, The Third Reformation?: Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition, Mercer University Press, Georgia, 1983.

<sup>20</sup>Enthusiasm (known as "die Schwärmerei," "der Schwärmer-eifer"), fanaticism, ecstasy: The belief that God still reveals Himself directly to man by a special act outside His revelation in the Scripture; the theory that human reason, intuitive, knowledge, or religious experience are valid sources and criteria of truth. Theologically, enthusiasm is an intense earnestness or emotionalism. The Holy Spirit is seen as working directly in the life of the believer. The enthusiasts of Luther's time, like Muentzer, Carlstadt, "Zwickau Prophets," "Heavenly Prophets," etc., condemn the Lutherans. Their object was to clear the way internally for the Holy Spirit who does not need a vehicle (Scripture) to work. Many common aspects can be seen between this movement of the 16th century and the modern charismatic movement. See LW-AE 40 73-223 -- "Against the Heavenly Prophets in Matter of Images and Sacraments," 1525.

The church scene in Korea may be cited as another example of the neo-Pentecostal movement today. At one time a stronghold of Calvinism, Korean churches are more and more leaning to charismatic tendencies, consciously engaging in what they call "Spirit-movement," speaking in tongues, healing, going to prayer halls and "mountain-prayer," with accent on fasting, external expansionism, etc. In seminary classrooms Calvinism is taught, while at the parish level <sup>(Zwinglianism/)</sup>Armenianism and spiritualism are more widely practiced. Many concerned Christians and theologians in Korea have begun to express grave concerns.

The so called "sung-ryung woon-dong" (lit. Spirit-movement) is a peculiar religious phenomenon in the Korean Christendom which reveals the unique situation of the social, political, religious and spiritual milieu of today in Korea. Behind the phenomenal growth of the churches in Korea is this enthusiastic Pentecostal movement. (The writer's personal observation through readings and contacts)

What are some of the causes for the rapid rise of neo-Pentecostalism today?

First, it seems to stem from a sense of frustration with the traditional denominations in many instances. It is, as someone remarked, the "unpaid bill" or a "catch-up work" of the established churches. Secondly, viewing the phenomena more positively, it gives expression to a new mission and to the rediscovery of the task of the church, with stress on the 'renewal' of the church and Christian life; faith-renewal movement; liturgical renewal in some instances; Bible study movement; calling for better pastoral care; and trying to make the Holy Spirit more authentic and His work more visible. Thirdly, people want to experience religion, faith and God. In fact, one common denominator is EXPERIENCE. Lastly, people want to participate, in prayer, in worship, in religious action and behavior, and in religious expression.

In the light of these factors, the church has a tremendous task to meet these desires and needs of the people. How should we interpret the religious "experience" in practical terms, revitalize the Christian churches and provide proper outlets for the people to express their religious feelings and actions through satisfying participation?

#### 4. "Experience" in Christian Life

The real nature and meaning of the charismatic movement today may be grasped by a theological interpretation of "experience" from extreme to moderate views.

There are certain common factors in neo-Pentecostalism related to religious 'experience.' Speaking in tongues, in particular, seems to be an especially appealing way of breaking away from the controlled and predictable ways of reason, science, and technology. The following common characteristics may be noteworthy:

- 1). It is something outside the self (self-transcendence) happenings to Christians in the context of their faith, often with some spectacular signs.
- 2). Some charismatics observe: "the organic view of the charismatic experience is seen as an outgrowth or actualization of the Spirit's work." (Christenson, 1971)
- 3). It is a new awareness of the all powerful presence of God, according to Cardinal Suenens in 1975. It is "God Himself," not merely His dynamism which constitutes "gifts" (Christenson). This is to mean a religious experience which fills the believers and initiates a decisively new awareness of the all-powerful presence of God working in one's life.
- 4). It is extremely difficult to separate one's emotional reaction from the ~~eternal~~ experience. This may also be true of all human perception.

Do neo-Pentecostals fail to appreciate the blessings of the means of Grace? Some do; others do not. Is the movement a charismatic experience of GOD, or of Satan? It is not so easy to answer these questions, for there are so many different shapes of the so-called "charismatics."

Francis Pieper allows for Christian experience in the context of the Christian faith, a faith-experience and an experience wrought by faith itself. In fact, good works, a form of Christian life experience, are shown as evidence of faith. In Christ, good works give assurance of salvation.<sup>21</sup> Here justification and sanctification should not be mixed, nor should the uses of the law be confused. (cf.

"Against Latomus," 1521. LW-AE 32:133-260)

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<sup>21</sup> Pieper, Francis, Christian Dogmatics, I, 120; II, 446. Also S.D. II, 65f. Cf. William Hordern, Experience and Faith: The Significance of Luther for understanding Today's Experiential Religion, 1983: "Luther and Religious Experience." Religious experience can hardly be defined objectively. Each person concerned can only define the experience from his personal perspective.

a. The Nature of "Experience":

Unfortunately, much of the Lutheran anti-charismatic literature on the subject seems to focus on the "gifts" (e.g. speaking in tongues, healing, etc.) of the Spirit and not on "experience" itself. The understanding of "experience in religion" is indeed the key issue. (See: Borden's book, Experience and Faith.) Religion and 'experience' are inseparable. Therefore, to ask "Is experience necessary or unnecessary?" can be a wrong way of putting the question. We all need experiences, both ordinary experiences in life and religious experiences -- encounter with self and the divine without rational expression or interpretation. What experience is to be seen as 'Christian' experience? What is the basis of such experience?

- How are we to verbalize (articulate) religious experience?
- How are we to describe such experience, or can we do it at all?
- Can we formulate religious experience?

If YES, is the formulatable experience true experience?

If NO, isn't the unformulatable experience mere subjectivism?

(A DDR Church Report on the charismatics' understanding of salvation:  
Salvation is "experience-able" = erfahrbar, "ascertainable" = feststellbar,  
and "establish-able" = herstellbar.)

In fact, there are various levels of human experience, e.g.:

- Experience of being convinced -- a kind of intellectually convinced experience.
- Experience of being felt -- an emotional experience of feeling.
- Experience of being engaged -- a behavioral element of experience in the form of expressing faith in action.
- Experience of being shared -- a social element in experiencing with others, e.g. in the life of a congregation and Christian fellowship.

Wholesome human experience at any rate presupposes an involvement of the entire person, with one's intellectual, emotional, volitional, and social aspects.

While such human experience is taking place, objectivity (guest's view) and subjectivity (host's view) are frequently in a state of tension. Even to make such a contrast may do more harm than good: Nevertheless, such a sharp contrast is, realistically speaking, going on.

b. Luther and "Experience":

In his Table Talk, Luther once said: "Experience alone makes a theologian." (also cf. WA 5:163, 28-29: Operationes in Psalmos, 1519-1521). He knew very well the reality and the importance of the experiences of the Christian church on the one hand, and the experience of individual Christians on the other. Luther meant 'experience' which is put in God's hand, and experience expressed through the Word of God. Luther had gone through the great "Tower Experience" (April-May, 1513) with the Holy Scripture which transformed his very existence. (Ps. 31:1; 71:2; Rom. 1:16-17). For Luther, the Scripture judges "experience," not vice versa.

Luther's basic concern was not "experience" as such, but the wrong approach to religious experience among the 'enthusiasts' of his day. They used to tear down "the bridge, the path, the way, the ladder, and all the means by which the Spirit might come to you," with the repeated cry of "Spirit, Spirit, Spirit!" (with reference to Karlstadt's repeated use of the term). They disregard God's design of inward things, such as faith, the real ground of faith, the Holy Scripture (Cf. "Against the Heavenly Prophets....," LW-AE 40:147, 149, 157). Here it is significant to note Luther's observation on the twofold manner in which God sends forth His holy gospel to us, viz: First, in an outward manner through the oral word and material signs (baptism and the sacrament of the altar); second, inwardly, through the Holy Spirit, faith, and other gifts. Everything depends on this order (Cf. LW-AE 40:146ff.). Any religious experience apart from this vital consideration is questionable. In the final analysis, the primacy of the Word of God above all human subjective experiences, as the basis for all Christian teachings, really caused Luther to reject the mysticism which underlay the subjective notions of Karlstadt and his followers, the "Wittenberg Radicals" and the "spiritualists" of the day. This is as true for our time as for Luther's time.

Luther's often quoted words "Oratio, meditatio, tentatio faciunt theologum," referring to Ps. 119 (LW-AE 34:285), elucidates what the true meaning of Christian

"experience" ought to be. (Cp. Melancthon's advice for the making of a theologian:  
- Reading Scripture daily, - arranging the theology of Scripture into clear summae.)

First, it was Luther's conviction that prayer (oratio) without God's Word and His promise is no longer prayer. To whom should one pour out his heart, and for what? Is it possible to have a true Christian experience without prayer, and to pray without having a spiritual experience? NO! Is prayer an expression of spiritual experience? YES! We should not be so presumptuous as to try and understand the spiritual experience without first seeking God's aid and guidance in pious prayer.

Secondly, experience, reflecting upon the Word of God (meditatio), is a form of obedient prayer. It may be a transcendent aspect of religious experience in meeting with the Gospel. In encountering the Gospel, one may say with Matthias Claudius (1740-1815, a Lutheran poet who defended faith in the age of rationalism): "Ich danke, und ich freue mich, weil ich bin was ich bin!" It is an "aufgehobene Gefuehl" (a lifted-up feeling). Meditation is not thinking up one's own opinion about the Scripture, but contemplating on the meaning of what God says to us.

Thirdly, tentatio (Anfechtung) is inner spiritual struggle and affliction, including the facing of temptation and suffering, the feeling of the burden and pain of the Law, and the fear of being separated from God. Here, Luther would have advised: Be firm and remain steadfast in the Word of God. Take the theology of the cross seriously. Faith is an anchorline which has its own anchorage, the Word of God and the Gospel promises. In the theology of the cross Luther saw what Christ experienced and which eventually became Luther's own experience. Through pain and affliction in life, man is led to seek God's Word and with it, the Gospel message.

##### 5. Luther's "Theology of the Cross" and "Experience"

These are some significant words of Johann Sebastian Bach incorporated into his cantata for the 19th Sunday after Trinity.



The cross then I will gladly bear,  
 Bestowed on me by God's dear hand.  
 It leads me safe through many a snare,  
 Into my God's own promised land.  
 Into a grave shall then pass all my fears,  
 My Savior then shall wipe away all tears.

This theology of the cross emanated from the question: "Wie bekomme ich einen gnaedigen Gott?"

In contrast to the "theology of glory," the theology of the cross was a basic principle of Luther's entire theology.<sup>22</sup> Behind this is Luther's distinct understanding of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Deity, mediator, savior, and human/divine redeemer.<sup>23</sup> For Luther, the divinity of Christ, the Nicene homousios, is vitally important. Christ is for Luther quite literally 'God incarnate and clothed with man's nature.'<sup>24</sup> True Christian religion begins at the lowest, not at the highest point as in some other religions, that is, it begins with God's condescension to sinful man. God will not and cannot be found except through and in his humanity. The Incarnation is like a "veil" through which the God of majesty confronts us. Luther speaks of the divinity of Christ as "hidden" (abscondita) in the humanity. (Rom. 10:15ff.) In fact, it can be said that God is more deeply hidden in Christ crucified than He is in His creation. In Luther's thought, divinity and humanity are not as such mutually exclusive.

For the humanity would be no use if the divinity were not in it; yet on the other hand, God will not and cannot be found except through and in this humanity.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Walther von Loewenich, Luther's Theology of the Cross, 1976, pp. 12, 13. Marc Lienhard, Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ, Augsburg, 1982, p. 65. Also Cf. Luther's Devotional Writings found in LW-AE vols. 42 and 43.

<sup>23</sup> Philip S. Watson, Let God be God, 102-48: "The Theology of the Cross."

<sup>24</sup> WA 40 I: 78f.: deus incarnatus et humanus deus. Hordern, op.cit. p. 105: "Luther's theology of cross led him to see that God ... was to be served in the world with its people.... God is experienced in relationships with other people in daily life.... Christian experience is not simply some inner, mystical, ecstatic feeling; ... Christian experience is any experience of a person who has faith in Christ...."

<sup>25</sup> WA 10 I, 208. 22ff.

The theology of glory knows God from his works; the theology of the cross knows Him from His suffering (Rom. 1:20; I Cor. 1:21ff.) and humiliation. Here Luther uses "works" to describe God's works in creation and "suffering" to describe the cross of Christ. The former seeks to know God directly in His obviously divine power, wisdom, and glory; whereas the latter paradoxically recognizes Him precisely where He has hidden Himself, in His suffering and in all that which the theology of glory considers to be weakness and foolishness.<sup>26</sup> Again, according to the theology of the cross our knowledge of God must be drawn from the suffering Christ in his humiliation.<sup>27</sup>

Luther contrasted the theology of the cross with the views of mediaeval scholasticism and mysticism which maintained that a "natural" knowledge of God could be obtained by the unaided human reason as it strove to climb up to heaven ("natural theology") and scrutinize the divine majesty (theology of glory). The latter holds that true knowledge of God derives from the study of nature which reflects God's glory.<sup>28</sup> In his commentary on Thesis 21 of the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther says that the theology of glory "prefers works to suffering and glory to the cross."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Althaus, ~~The~~ Theology of Martin Luther, pp. 26-28.

<sup>27</sup> In contrast to the theology of the cross, liberal Christians direct attention to the question: "How can I find a gracious neighbor?" Christ's suffering on the cross for us is turned into a suffering with us, suffering with all the oppressed and enslaved in the world. Such a struggle to join with the suppressed Minjung (people with han, as in Minjung Theology in Korea) in the process of liberation to bring about the true human community has little to do with the theology of the cross. "Liberation" is the chief topic of present-day theological concern in their agenda. The theology of the cross, in contrast to this view, actually testifies to the fact that on the cross Christ has liberated for true communion with God and all others who have received that liberation through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul's theology of the cross retains its key role in that it makes use of the cross in polemical criticism of all other approaches to salvation; for example, his criticism of the Judaic and Hellenistic approaches to salvation (I Cor. 1:18, Phil. 3:18). Another modern alternative is a "theology of glory," characterized as a theology of success, which looks upon financial gain, external growth, and visible signs of divine blessing. It seeks progress in this world which may ultimately lead to an earthly paradise.

<sup>28</sup> WA 1:353-74 (Heidelberg Disputation), 613, 614 (95 Theses, No. 58)

<sup>29</sup> LW-AE 31:52f.

Paul Althaus sums up as follows:

Luther's theology of cross means that the cross conceals God and thus marks the end of all speculation about God on the part of self-confident reason. The cross is the symbol of judgment over man and this marks the end of all achieving of fellowship with God on the part of the self-confident moralistic man. The cross makes itself available only to experience; more accurately: only to the suffering of God prepared by him for us through and with Christ.<sup>30</sup>

The year 1984 has been the "Year of Christianity" in Korea, the centennial of Protestantism and the bicentennial of Roman Catholicism in Korea. Many anniversary programs and events have been held. Pope John Paul II made a special visit to Korea in May of this year (1984). Eulogies are made for the great contributions of the saints and martyrs in the course of two centuries; rapid numerical growth of the churches is noted with thanksgiving and amazement. On the other hand, a number of seriously minded Christians have expressed their concern for the many grievous problems in the Korean Church, such as, external expansion with little internal solidarity; numerical growth accompanied by the loss of the real savor of Christians; clerical/ecclesiastical authoritarianism; self-centered practice of Ki-bok, a quid pro quo dealing with God, e.g., assuring salvation with offerings; secular-sacred dichotomy. The real crisis lies in the "quantitativism" of a ki-bok-oriented (prayer-blessing-oriented) church life influenced by Shamanism.<sup>31</sup> What these critics

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<sup>30</sup> Althaus, op. cit., 28.

<sup>31</sup> Prof. Sang Hee Moon of Yonsei University in Seoul has made a considerable amount of study on this subject during the last two decades. Also cf. a seminar result on: "Korean Christianity" which is being syncretized with Shamanism, as reported in Han Kook Ilbo, May 23, 1978. More in later years.

Shamanism: Shamanism, in a traditional narrow technical sense, is more of a set of techniques and ideology attached to a religion, rather than itself a religion, which has its own history and system of beliefs. Therefore, shamanism must always be considered in the context of the religion and society in which it is found. Shamanism or shamanistic elements may be found in religions all over the world and from Paleolithic times. It takes many forms and serves a variety of roles. If we consider the shaman minimally as one who specializes in techniques of entering into a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld, certain forms of cosmology, religion, and society usually correspond to such belief.... Shamanism has to do with the "theories of disease," blessings, communication with the dead, experiences of 'trance,' etc. mostly through Shaman... Historically speaking, shamanism is a phase of the religion of Tunguese people whose faith and practices are led by shaman (priest or medicine-man) involving priestly, prophetic and medical functions. It is based upon the theory of possession, in which a spirit from outside the individual takes possession of the individual and operate through the possessed one.

are saying is that Korean Christendom, along with all its fascinating reports and success stories, tends more toward a theology of glory than the theology of the cross. The church must seek to live in accord with the theology of the cross in terms of personal piety, worship, pastoral care, administration of the sacraments, and true Christian stewardship. Korean Christendom, at the same time, has tremendous potential in numbers, in commitment, and in active evangelistic outreach, which can be a great stimulus and assistance to the churches in Asia and elsewhere in the world. Missionaries are being sent out; increasing numbers of people come from outside for study and observation on the Christian scene. The Korean "sung-ryung woondong" (spirit movement), whether that be a "paternal spirit movement" which is socially and materially oriented or a "maternal spirit movement" which is more individual and inner oriented, may make a positive contribution to the world Christendom.

#### 6. Viable Alternatives and Suggestions in Asian Context

a. The ideas of the salvation of the individual and of social redemption with social ethics, which are both clearly evident in Korean Christendom, are not incompatible, nor do they have to be mutually exclusive. In fact, they can be mutually complementary. The "Two Kingdoms" idea and the Law-Gospel polarity in the Reformer's thought are once again noteworthy. "Everyone is above all things to pay attention and hold fast: ... the law of God ... to recognize sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7) ... to preach the comforting word of the Gospel ..."<sup>32</sup> The power and glory of the law makes all become sin (Rom. 3:9; Gal. 3:22). The grace of God, the gospel, however, is a 'special law of life' which makes persons good, and righteous, and alive. The office of Christ is the preaching of the splendor of grace (2 Cor. 3:6).<sup>33</sup> The writing "Against Latomus" gives a clear explanation of the relationship of sin and

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. "Against the Heavenly Prophets..." LW-AE 40:82ff.

<sup>33</sup> "Against Latomus," 1521, LW-AE 32:177, 178.

grace, law and gospel, and justification and sanctification.<sup>34</sup>

b. Drawing too sharp a contrast between the so-called 'object<sup>vi</sup>ism' and 'subjectivism' may often do more harm than good. There must be balance and harmony. Luther's consistent stress on the "means of grace" and personal encounter with the Lord and one's existence may give us a clue to a positive option.

c. A one-sided stress on "religious experience" may easily mislead us. Religious life, like all of life, is an engagement and involvement of not just emotion or just intellect, but of the total person.

d. Distorted Christianity is no longer authentic Christianity. Luther's constant struggle with the extremists, "Schwärmer," and "Heavenly Prophets" gives us a living lesson for today. He could not sacrifice what the Christian Church and Christian faith ought to be in order to be agreeable with those radicals. They did not pay attention to God's design of inward things, such as faith. Through the gospel, and nowhere else, is the Holy Spirit given. (cf. LW-AE 40:148, 82).

In his lengthy Pentecost sermon on John 14:23-31, Luther made the following statement:

Thus, we know how and where the Holy Spirit is to be found, and we need not be in doubt nor waver, gazing here and there for special revelation or illuminations. Each one should hold to the Word, and should know that through it alone, and through no other means, does the Spirit enlighten hearts and is he ready to dwell in them and to give true knowledge and comfort through faith in Christ. Where this is accomplished, where the Word concerning Christ is accepted by faith and the heart finds comfort in it, there we may know that the Holy Spirit is assuredly present and is performing his work, as has often been stated.<sup>35</sup>

e. The theology of the cross, not the theology of glory, is a viable option. In the suffering and cross of Christ, we see the real glory. <sup>(idea of prayer-blessing)</sup> "Ki-bok sa-sang" ^ cannot be a condition of faith (it is a neo-shamanism), nor can faith be a condition for material blessings (earthly gains, miracles, prosperity, etc.). That is work-righteousness! As "imitators" of Christ, Christians are to take the cross and

<sup>34</sup> LW-AE 32:133-260.

<sup>35</sup> WA 21:445.

follow Him who has taken suffering and cross for our salvation, true freedom and liberation. Through Him, not through some spectacular signs, we are saved.

f. To clarify the charismatic movements in Christendom today, it may be helpful to take a more serious look at "shamanism," its history, its objectives and practices. This is an assignment which is yet to be met with thoughtfulness. Today many people consider 'shamanism' and its practices as a part of the traditional cultural heritage. One may find many familiar phenomena of traditional shamanism in the Korean Christian charismatic movements today, and indeed in the mainstream of the church life as well. The local people in the early days of Christian missions in Korea used to call the Christian evangelist a "Western Shaman." After Christianity has passed through the stages of 'introduction' and 'interpretation,' in a place like Korea, and at last reaches the stage of 'indigenization' (contextualization), a surprise may await the rest of the Christian world, a surprise which may also raise disturbing questions.

g. In Christianity, as in the case of other religions, there appears a sophisticated tradition with developed theology on the one hand; and a folk tradition with emotional and frequently "shamanistic" popular practices on the other, e.g., many independent Christian sects in Korea and independent churches in Africa. An interesting analogy may be made with the phenomenon in the Islamic world of the orthodox Muslims vs. Folk Muslims (Sufism).<sup>36</sup> This same type of contrast has been the case in the area of Christian pneumatology: traditional orthodox understanding of the 'Spirit' and the folk practices in regard to the

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Phil Parshall, Bridges to Islam, A Christian Perspective on Folk Islam, Baker, 1983.

Spirit. This tension between orthodox Christianity and folk Christianity<sup>37</sup> is an area, particularly in Lutheran theology, which needs much more thorough exploration and study. Such a study may enable us to grasp the real meaning and significance of the increasing number of new indigenous churches and sects in the AALA (Asia-Africa-Latin America), including the growing number of Christians in Korea with strong neo-Pentecostal tendencies. Only with the help of such study and resultant understanding will we resolve some of the tensions in today's Christendom. Religious pluralism, on the other hand, will always be there. It presents a challenge, perhaps until the end of the world!

To sum up: Aren't we assuming too much? When we talk about the Christian Church and "charismatic movements" (or "charismatics"), aren't we talking about two different things which may be somehow related but not necessarily the same, i.e., traditional Christianity with classical faith claims (theology) in precise description on the one hand; and, on the other hand, a folk Christianity with more pragmatic

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<sup>37</sup> "Folk Christianity" represents those who have a more mystical orientation to religion (Christianity), depending on the more spectacular works of the Holy Spirit, on unusual experiences of joy and religious excitement, and on some type of visible relationship with the unfathomable God. Folk Christians are more inclined to the above trends than to the traditional doctrinal truths of orthodox Christianity. Frequently they exercise shamanistic practices, and the preacher (minister) often plays (in the minds of the believers) the role of a 'shaman,' a psychopomp, healer, etc.

In the context of contemporary Korean Christianity, a specially noteworthy aspect is the deep seated notions of ancient "folk religion" and its customs and practices which have been absorbed and adapted into Korean Christian life. For example, one can see a relation between the Christian "spirit world" where a pastor spends a week of prayer, fasting, and communing with nature at a "prayer hall," almost always located in a rather isolated mountain or hill spot -- with traditional Korean religious beliefs and expectations. Also one may notice the custom of funeral in Korea. What elements have been absorbed and taken over, and not necessarily after having been "baptized into Christ," from Buddhist/Confucian/Animistic background and beliefs? There is quite a mixture and variety of influences. The relation of traditional Korean culture to Christian practices is an area which needs to be more fully explored. An interesting analogy may also be made with the "spirit world" of Luther's time and his understanding and reaction to it.

practices suitable to the life of the common ordinary folks.<sup>38</sup> The latter has to do more with experiential theology about which it is extremely difficult to give all the particulars. We certainly recognize the limitations of human language, knowledge, and experience. Only to a certain extent can Christian 'experiences' be explainable in practical language. How the Christian faith and experience might reflect the mythical, paradoxical and poetic imageries of the East can be an interesting and important topic for further research. The visit of Pope John Paul II to Korea last May gave a new image to the general public of Korea and its Protestant Christians, in particular with regard to 'high' Christianity and its ritual and liturgy. Maybe some of the practitioners of primal religious groups thought that they were not so far after all from Christian practices (of the Roman Catholic Church, at least). The Christian church owes its people a better explanation to the real issue behind the tension between the work of the Holy Spirit as taught by the established denominations and by "charismatic movements," clear direction for the future, AND careful attention to a "Lutheran Spirituality". In consideration of this "Lutheran consideration" in Asia, one must answer, or make serious effort to answer, the following basic questions, namely:

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<sup>38</sup> Somewhat similar phenomena may be observed in the movements of Pietism in Germany, Jansenism in France, and Puritanism in England. The Pietistic movement, for example, was definitely interested more in the daily life of the "regenerated" and "sanctified" people experiencing of the Holy Spirit than theological formulations and doctrinal statements of classical Christian faith. Its primary concern was "Christ in us," the "subjective justification," rather than "Christ for us" in the teaching of the objective or forensic justification accomplished by Christ. The charismatic movements of our time appear to be like the late 20th century enthusiasm with emotional overtones and pietistic undertones. They see more sense in subjective religious experiences (pietistic practice) than in the use of the objective means of grace (the orthodox doctrine). Both the charismatic movement and "Liberation Theology" of our generation seem to have common ground with the above movement in Europe of the past centuries, especially the stress on 'practice' and the deemphasis of doctrine. On the Reformation, Pietism, and charismatic movements today, cf. C. Lindberg's book The Third Reformation?, 1983. Also cf. the works of Johann Arndt (1555-1621).



- What does it mean to believe a religion?
- What does it mean to learn (study) about a religion?
- What does it mean to experience religion?
- What does it mean to live (practice) a religion?

Obviously, our primary concern, as Lutherans, is "Lutheran" way of reflecting these questions in regard to our Christian faith and life in Jesus Christ our Savior. In such effort one may also find a clue to answer another timely question: What should be the Lutherans in 1990s in Asia? One may suggest these unfinished tasks to the APATS/LWF for further exploration in the future. Indeed, these were concerns of Dr. Martin Luther then, and they are our concerns today.

## SPIRIT AND SPIRITS IN ANIMISTIC RELIGIONS

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 Response to the paper of Dr. Jose B. Fuliga

by

A. A. Sitompul

First of all, I must say a word of deep appreciation and thanks to the Rev. Dr. Jose B. Fuliga for his excellent and scholarly paper on SPIRIT AND SPIRITS IN ANIMISTIC RELIGIONS. I enjoyed reading it very much and it was an opportunity for me to learn many things. I have not much to say as critical comments, but I would like to raise the following questions and points for some clarifications and general discussion.

Dr. Fuliga presented his paper in two parts, namely 1. The Wholly and Holy Other of the Animists, and 2. The Spirit World of the Animists.

1. He describes animistic belief in one supreme Being as found in South East Asia. There are different names for the singular supreme God in South East Asia. But Dr. Fuliga, basing himself on the research studies of C.S. Yang and E.A. Nida, also sees that some animistic tribes (for example in Taiwan and other countries) do not believe in a supreme being.

The functions and natures of a supreme being according to Dr. Fuliga are: Creator/god, omnipotent, gracious god, inaccessible god, righteous judge, all seeing, greater than all deities, dwell in the heavens or high mountains.

The natures of God are also similar in Africa, namely God is good, merciful, holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere, limitless, self-existent, the first-cause, spirit, never changes and unknowable (cf. John Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion*, London, 1975, pp. 48.)

Dr. Fuliga distinguished the mythological God in animistic beliefs and the biblical and historical God since Abraham. There is no divine revelation in animistic religions. So the people would not be able to see and to find God, and nobody could describe him, who and what he did/does. They have tried to formulate certain ideas about the nature of God through their religious experience, tradition and certain insight.

The concept of Wholly and Holy Other must be critically analyzed and examined as Creator, Sustainer, Ruler, Provider, Controller, and either he is transcendent, imminent and/or transparent in relationship to the whole creation, including human beings. How do we understand in Asia today the biblical God (Trinity God) in the context of the Wholly and Holy Other (Supreme Being)? Can we say the mythological God as Luther's Deus Absconditus to Dr. Fuliga's thought on Kabunyan of the Northern part of Luzon. Dr. Fuliga uses a terminology Deus Absconditus for the Luzon supreme being whom they call Kabunyan. The hidden God by M. Luther is not an animistic or mythological God, but God of Israel, Savior, a God who is hidden in Himself. Luther explained the hidden God from Isaiah 45,15 and the revealed God in the context of preaching the gospel. Or would Dr. Fuliga relate the hidden God who is not preached into the God who works all things including among mythological Gods.

2. In the second part, Dr. Fuliga underlines the spirit world of the animists. The absence of God from his creation has been replaced by the presence of innumerable spirits, is a starting point of Fuliga's description on spirits.

This universe is filled with spirits. Everyone and everything has spirits. So we see the types of spirits are namely nature spirits (land, lakes, rivers, the sea, the forest, mountains, the trees, the plants, rice), creature spirits (animals, birds), and human spirits, people, tribe, individual ancestors, personalized non-human beings (?), the dead).

Dr. Fuliga does not say anything of sky-spirits.

It is our question to Dr. Fuliga whether the absence of God from his creation has been replaced by the presence of innumerable spirits, so the spirits become innumerable spirits, so the spirits become representatives of supreme beings, have a transparent position to human beings, and their status are beneath of divinities and above the status of human beings.

Dr. Fuliga pointed out that spirits according to their believers are invisible beings, unpredictable, gullible, dualistic in function (good and evil), need sacrifices/meat/blood and honor from their descendants/people, ubiquitous and powerful, immortal or eternal, and wider domain. They also have their status or own functions, to curse and to bless, to let their believers live and to kill them.

The activities and form spirits societies are similar to those of human life. Dr. Fuliga quotes from P.B. Pederson that spiritists are "thought to live like men with their wives and children, slaves and cattle, playing, waging war, and arguing among themselves" (Batak Blood and Protestant Soul, pp. 2)).

The believers of animistic religion are not able to see spirits directly with their physical eyes, because the spirits are invisible. The believers try through shaman or datu to realize what are the willingness of the spirits to the human beings. There are three kinds of spirits who influence human beings: the good, the evil and those which can be both. Dr. Fuliga described these kinds in the context of the spirits of the dead. The spirits of the dead are usually good to the living or their descendants, that is why they honor and invoke for health, protection and aid and in times of war and planting.

I would add that the idea of harmonization, atonement or restoration of the total order in the Kosmos is also dependend on the human deeds to the spirits either through offerings, sacrifices, prayers, rites or ceremony. Again, Dr. Fuliga underlines the spirit of the dead, who did without any descendant, whose status in society is very low, but he does not distinguish the spirits of long dead and recently dead (living dead!) which play a great role among the animistic believers. The Batak divide the souls of the dead into three classes, namely

- a) begu (souls of the dead in general,
- b) some of the begu in the course of time, if they have many descendants and honour the begu, become higher spirits and have a position in the kingdom of the dead (which are called sumangot ,
- c) Sombaon , the most eminent of the ancestors and founders of their tradition and communities (those of 7 generations)

(cf. Joh. Warneck, *The Living Christ and Dying Heathenism*, Michigan, 1954, pp. 62). (Sombaon is deification of the spirit/*Fondi* and the highest grade of spirit).

Dr. Fulga does not say in his paper the role of dream-soul. The absence of the soul (*tondi*) from the body leaves the person concerned in a crisis, no longer in harmony or in unity.

### 3. In the Bible the hebrew "ruah" is translated as

- a) wind which is a powerful force , invisible and mysterious
  - b) breath or spirit, which we see as life and vitality of human beings.
- In some passages we see man's ruah is identified with God's ruah (of Gen 6,3; Ps 104,29f; Job 27,3; 32,8). It is very difficult to decide whether ruah means human spirit or divine spirit in following passages for example Mk 14,38; Lk 1,17.80; 1 Cor 14,14,32; 2 Cor 4, 13; Eph 1,17; 2 Tim 1,7. A ruah from God could be for bad/evil as well as for good (1 Sa 16, 14-16; 1 Ki 22, 19-23).
- There are some elements dealing with heavenly spirits (Acts 23, 8f; Heb 1,7.14) and the spirits of the dead (Luk 24,37,39; Heb. 12,23; 1 Peter 3,19).

### 4. We also see the functions of soul of the dead in the bible. The hebrew Nesama/nepes will be:

- an individual/person (Lev 7,21),
- applied to a dead body (Lev 19,28), and
- the source of emotion (Ps 86,4; Job 30,25),
- associated with the will/action (Ps 24,4; Gen 49,6).

5. In K. Koyama "Waterbuffalo Theology" he raised the question "how do we relate Holy Spirit to traditional world of many spirits and the modernized world of several spirits? The people and the spirits in Asia share one integral community life and spiritual life. So, how do we understand spiritis as power, life and vitality of creature, not only in the context of anthropology but also in the context of theology for mission and human beings.

6. According to M. Luther, flesh, the world and the devil are against God. The devil's works are through our flesh and through the world. Luther describes natural man is completely flesh, the entire man is against God, he/she lives "outside of the grace and the spirit of Christ" (LW 27, 249.399). Luther said "everything that is done by the flesh is fleshly - no matter how deeply it is hidden in the soul" (WA 17 II, 18), and "everything that the old man is with his best and highest powers, both internal and external - including the deep evil of his self-will, darkened understanding, reason, wisdom, and pride in his good works, spiritual life, and whatever other gifts of God may be in him is flesh" (WA 17 II, 11).

7. How do we understand our theme "Spirit and Spirits in animistic Religions" in relation to Eph. 2, 1 - 3 and Col 1, 13 - 22.

by Rev. G.D. Melanchthon, India

to the paper "Spirit and spirits in classical Asian religions and traditions" by Dr. Andrew Chiu, Hong Kong

The task of responding to this paper appear is as difficult as its writing for it deals with as many as a dozen religions and traditions. The author has taken a lot of time and pain to prepare this long paper prefacing with a discussion of the meaning of spirit and spirits, then covering seven classical religions. He also dealt with five characteristic features of Asian traditions. Looking at the bibliography one would understand how much time it would have involved in preparing this paper. He also took pain to define Asian traditions otherwise known as folk religions which in itself is a thorough study. For all this work he deserves our congratulations and thanks.

In the first part of the paper where the preliminary study on the Spirit and spirits was undertaken, the understanding of Spirit in Christianity rather than the Asian religions is evident; this is also stated by the author. Indeed it is natural for we are Christians and therefore we try to understand that the subject prefix does not cohere and integrate with the study of the main topic - the Spirit and spirits in classical Asian religions and traditions - which deals mostly with non-Christian religions.

The second part began with zoroastrainism, where it was pointed out that against Ahura Mazda, the good god, there is Angra Mainyu or Ahirman, the evil spirit with a hierarchy of evil spirits, pitched in battle. The men are to take sides with the one or the other. Manichaeism does not offer anything new over and above what Zoroastrainism has offered.

The author expected the respondent to deal with the understanding of the Spirit and spirits in Hinduism, unfortunately many of the scholars on Hinduism grossly neglected the treatment of living religions of the common people which may be termed as folk or popular Hinduism. The other stream is Vedic and based on literary traditions. Both these streams, although often contradictory, are intertwined and coexist. These beliefs are found not only in the villages but also in the towns, not only among lower classes but among the educated and so-called high caste. However, it must be said that it is at village level and among tribes that the popular Hinduism is mostly observed.

The change from a nomadic to a stable way of life brought a new outlook based on the practice of burying the dead bodies near or around the village. From the observation of nature they believe that the body which is dead would also raise, and that the dead live even after death because there is life or some kind of power in them as there is in the seeds. They also believe that just as there is the world of the living beings there is also a world of the dead. The dead relate themselves to the relatives and continue to care for them just as they did while they were alive, only if the living care for them. The caring of the dead implies feeding and propitiating them at regular intervals.

The powers are called bhutas or spirits. Living beings deal with them in three ways: 1) to prevent them from wandering, nail them to a locality by erecting stones, 2) to prevent them from seeking victims, sacrifice of animals and offering of blood on the stone, 3) the head of the spirit may be worshiped for protection.

All over the world the tribal religions are characterized as animism, the belief in spirits. These are the spirits of animals of the jungle and the wilderness. When the tribal man settled in villages, the jungle around him was unknown and became the abode of hostile powers and spirits, the demarcation of boundaries so that this tribe might not cross and enter into enemy territory.

They deal with them in two ways, just as the spirits of the dead are dealt with. If there are spirits on a tree, anchor them to a locality by placing a stone and offering blood. The second way is to induce the spirit to dwell at the entrance of the village and propitiate with regular sacrifices so that he can prevent his followers from entering the village to harm them. We come across the stones carved or uncarved, smeared with blood or vermillion at the entrance of villages.

There is a third category of spirits, which are thought of as the power of life. Sakti. The spirit is generally imagined to be feminine on the basis of rhythmic life, which bears as the mother. It is also the controller of disease which periodically plague the villages. Each epidemic is under the control of one feminine deity or spirit. These together are called gramadevatas, village deities.

With the spirit of the dead, the spirit of unknown jungles and the spirit of disease, the common man's life is constant fear and trembling and attempting to placate and propitiate the spirits.

These practices which go back to the prehistoric times, were incorporated into Hinduism to such an extent that they can no more be distinguished separately from Brahmanic Hinduism. The spirits are both benevolent and malevolent and some are very dangerous, depending upon the kind of dead, for example, death of persons with unfulfilled desires and unrealized wishes.

There is only one saving fact. Occasionally and at the peak of the festival season some persons get possessed by the spirits and their oracles are very much valued. In a society hidden with caste the differences are forgotten and equality, however temporary, prevails. At the time of Holi (spring festival) and at Mathangi festival the possessed can hurl any abuse on the people of higher caste; and all distinctions between sexes, castes, classes are obliterated.

If I am allowed to state, that the fear of multifarious spirits led many east Indians, originally people of primal religious beliefs to be attracted to Christianity where there is the belief of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit in Christianity is holy as against malevolent spirits which need to be feared, fed and propitiated.

Jainism, Buddhism, both in Theravada and in Mahaya forms, Sikhism and even Islam share in the animistic belief of spirits, partly due to the fact that they are unable to grow out of the religious ethos out of which they have emerged, and partly due to the influence of Hinduism which has a predominant place for the belief in spirits.

Buddhism which did not concern itself with the discussion of god originally, had incorporated what is known as devil dance from indigenous religion in Sri Lanka, in an attempt to drive away the devils.

Islam, even though it is originally monotheistic, in its diachronic form has belief in many spirits which is evident in the veneration of saints, and others at their tombs, and also in their search for exorcists and arming themselves with amulets, taveez, etc.

In the third part, the author deals with the Asian traditions - nature worship, animal-plant worship, Fetish worship, ancestor and Hero worship, immortals and imaginary god worship - fits very well with the description of the dominant feature of primal religions, known as animism.

The author should have made some conclusions on the basis of this study. After reading the thirty pages, the readers are not very much helped to come to any general understanding of the Spirit and the spirits. One has to take the risk of being criticized for generalization.

I also feel that the paper should have inquired further into the matter of consequences of the belief in spirits. In this connection some questions arise, like 1) how does the belief in Spirit and spirits affect the life of the people in Asian countries? 2) How does this belief affect their worldview or outlook or attitude to life and the world?



THE CONCEPTS OF SPIRITS IN MELANESIAN SOCIO-CULTURAL SPHERESA Reaction to Dr. Hutagaŕung's Paper

by Gernot Fugmann

Introduction

Together with my family I recently revisited Ponampa, the mission station to which we had been assigned shortly after arriving in Papua New Guinea. Having the topic of this address in mind I became overwhelmingly aware of the presense of the spirits among the Auyana people surrounding the station. Approaching the station we crossed a river at Waifina village. The old bridge swayed so much that we were afraid it would collapse any moment. Crossing the river many years ago I had first heard of the myth of creation in that particular area. The cultural hero of the Auyana people had originally been a snake and had lived where the bridge is now. Although a snake he was able to change into a human being. This he had done in order to marry a beautiful girl. She had born him all the small animals of the forest, the rats, the snakes and the oposums. Eventually he devoured his step mother and was in turn killed by his wife. She had given him vegetables mixed with hot stones. By drinking water from the river steam had developed within his body and he had exploded. The many stone boulders in the river and on the mountain side still bear witness of this great explosion. The imposing large stone boulders are clearly visible from the station. They also remind people of a cult which had been performed there while I was missionary. An especially large rock formation had been called 'Australia'. One man, Wanamera had dreamt that the ancestral spirits of the Auyana people live there somewhere in a cave deep inside the rocks. Wanamera had been the profet of this particular cult leading the people to perform various kinds of sexual and fertility rituals, which they believed would solicit the benevolence of the spirits and bring about ultimate wealth and salvation.

Right opposite the station on another mountain ridge a once lively bustling village was deserted. The huts were left to rot and the usual indications of human presence, such as dogs, pigs and chicken had vanished. It was eerie to walk where once I had experienced the baptism of over one hundred villagers. Where the bush church had stood kunai grass wiped out all traces of the building. Why had the people left? I was told that land and bush spirits had made the place so unhealthy to live that many men, women and children had died. New hamlets had been built, some many kilometers away in areas thought to be safe.

In visiting the area I became quite convinced after one or two days that I had only been able to capture a minute segment of life experience with spirits. How many more spirits would the day to day experience of Auyana people naturally include? Reckoning with them while gardening or building new villages, pacifying them in sickness or death, evoking their goodwill for life, blessing and protection.

In addressing the topic of spirits in socio-cultural spheres of Melanesia we will have to bear in mind that there are many differing societies with varying conceptions of spirits. Any sketchy generalizations will therefore do injustice to the one or other understanding. Nevertheless I will risk a generalization in an attempt to help us as foreigners and theologians to give such meaning to these concepts that they show what universal experience and concern Melanesian people share with all human beings.

#### Presuppositions for an understanding of spirits in Melanesia

##### The search for fulness of life

In my first years as missionary in Ponampa a man by the name of Oyanoo visited me one day. In an old towel he had wrapped up all his savings. Showing it to me he asked for permission to build a church on a nearby mountain. In the following conversation I basically encouraged him, at the same time trying

to make it clear that building a church should be a communal effort. If other Christians were willing to help him I would wholeheartedly support the project. Quite satisfied he left me. Days later church elders of the neighbouring villages told me that Oyanoo had gone around speaking to the assembled villagers. The emphasis of his message was: "The missionary told me that we should unite, collect money and build a church. The various clans should also build communal houses there. When this is accomplished we will all assemble on the Asempa mountain, pray and clap our hands in praise of Christ. Then he will come down from heaven, we will change our skins and live in the fulness of life".

To me Oyanoo's message expresses a basic concern of all Melanesian religions, namely that the search for a fulness of life is the ultimate goal of all religious efforts. For Oyanoo such life did not only encompass a new bodily existence symbolized by a new skin. It is much more. Life is understood in its totality including strength, security, prestige, reconciliation and such harmony which enables the whole community to unite. Such life is only possible within the community. In Melanesia it has always been a vision of salvation, that the ultimate life comes to consummation in sodality and fellowship. For Oyanoo it was a precondition for gaining salvation to come together, to build houses and a church in which worship is the symbolic expression of harmony. Only this will generate what is called gutpela sindaun in the Pidgin language.

### What is Life

In traditional Melanesian society, life was primarily experienced as a very intricate system of relationships, which affected the fate of each individual, community and cosmic entity.<sup>(1)</sup> Apart from the inter-human relationships within a community the relationships to other communities and the spirit world were important. Such a system of relationships formed a web supporting,

enabling and germinating life and its growth. Disarranged and discordant relationships however induced a gradual depletion of the flow of life, ultimately leading to a collapse of everything meaningful in the existence of a community; death and extinction were the threatening consequences. Hence people were very much aware of all the signs signalling either growth or reduction of life, because they revealed the condition of relationships.

Principally therefore life in primal Melanesian societies was gained by establishing, ordering, maintaining and expanding a system of relationships in a proper way. This constituted the basic pattern of the socio-cultural behaviour within a community.

#### Defining Relationships

The concept which governs relationships in Melanesia can best be described by the Pidgin word lo. The context of its meaning and its semantic connotations were first researched in the Madang area and are influenced by the local Bel language and English. (2) With minor modifications the underlying concept is however representative of most Melanesian societies, although expressed differently according to the linguistic areas.

In the everyday situation, lo describes the kindness, benevolence and the generosity of a person, who shows hospitality and concern for others. This is a sign that someone is in harmony with him/herself and in tune with the wisdom of the forefathers. This orientation in life results in a friendly, peaceful and conciliatory attitude, a posture which shows a self-confident maturity and avoids confrontation or rash actions. The Bel language describes this as Mazoz (3) and it corresponds to the Pidgin word bel isi, which is an essential part of a good and fulfilling life. Lo describes the predominant value within a community. Everyone is therefore expected to show lo and become involved with others. This is the only way the communal bel isi could be gained. The lo can therefore also be understood as a very

intricate system of reciprocity, which directs the life of all members of a society. The day to day tasks, the values or happenings, are seen and interpreted in the light of this system. Consequently lo can describe the simple act of giving food to another person or the complex ritual of appeasing ancestral spirits in cases of misfortune. Lo can refer to the mutual obligations between the relatives of a man and his wife or to the business contract of a trade partnership. In the case of food given to someone else, its meaning might be the willingness to initiate a relationship to the advantage of both sides, a gesture of reconciliation, or a legal obligation between in-laws.

For all relationships, it was furthermore of utmost importance to express lo-relationships adequately with tokens or visible objects, which correspond to the importance and extent of the relationship. An exchange of goods was therefore an integral part of any ritual. Spoken words alone were not liable or obligatory. Thus gratefulness could only be expressed by a gift; a man's marital promise to his wife's relatives needed to be symbolized by pigs or other precious objects generally called bride-price; a reconciliation was only credible if reinforced by a payment in proportion to the previously experienced disagreement. Such material expressions of attitude within relationships were therefore an intrinsic characteristic of all lo-relationships, giving them a promissory and liable feature.

Summarizing the lo concept, it could be described as a system of religious, social and legal reciprocity. Handed down by the ancestors, it created mutual obligations which give meaning to and regulate all relational modes of conduct and experience in the cosmic world of a community. Such lo-relationships are generally reinforced by tokens or visible objects, which correspond to the depth and importance of a relationship. Quite often these must be mediated in an aura of secrecy by knowledgeable men.

### The Concept of Spirits in Melanesia

We have seen how the complex concept of lo governs all relationships within the cosmos of a community and provides a tool to explain the events of life.

Let us therefore turn to see how this concept finds its implication in relation to the spirit world. The above mentioned examples among the Auyana will have illustrated that the experience of life in Melanesia is intrinsically interwoven with that of the cosmic community to which the individual belongs. Such a cosmic community embraces the living and the dead, all things visible and invisible, beings, deities and all powers in the cosmic world of a people. The spirits are of course a vital part of this cosmos.

Generally anthropologists divide them into three categories (4). Firstly there are the deities, the skypeople and the culture heroes who usually have creative or regulatory functions within the cosmos. Mostly they are believed to have existed right from the time of creation. While in some societies the deities or the cultural heroes have little or no interest in the affairs of humans, in other societies they are important and significant in their regulative function for the socio-cultural spheres of a community.

Secondly there are the spirit beings which inhabit nature, dwelling in rocks, forest lakes, trees or water falls. Usually referred to as masalai in the Pidgin language such spirit beings may cause harm or death if such precautionary measures as taboos or offerings are neglected.

The third category of spirits in Melanesia are the ancestors. Such ghosts are called tambaran in the Pidgin language. Those ancestors who have died recently are still believed to be in the vicinity of the living, while those long dead reside in some geographically distant part of the known cosmos.

According to Melanesian religions these three categories of spirits inhabit the cosmos and represent a reality of everyday experience. Important is that people live in relation to them, becoming constantly aware of what they

want, what they approve or dislike and how the reciprocity of lo can be maintained. As such they are very perceptive symbols, which 'express an awareness of participation in cosmic life' (5). Let us therefore describe in how far the different categories of spirits relate to the socio-cultural spheres of life in Melanesia.

#### The creative and regulative deities and cultural heroes

As humans we do not only lead a life in the present, to a large extent our life is also determined by our history, our past. In Melanesia this is expressed in the relationship to deities and cultural heroes. By relating to them through myths and rituals people align themselves to their world as it was originally conceived in primordeal times. The myths are vivid testimonies of such times, giving the living a paradigm of how this world is ideally formed and sustained.

By performing rituals people are enabled to renew this original time and to participate in it. This will ultimately generate salvation for the present whenever it is deemed necessary. Thus all creative acts in the socio-cultural spheres of life are related to the original event of creation in order to evoke the primordeal life force thought necessary for a continuity of life in a society. Consequently the planting of food gardens the building of a canoe for fishing, the erection of houses or the carving of a slit-gong are viewed as such creative acts which are essential for life and which need to be related to the pristine force of life. Such socio-cultural events must therefore be accompanied by religious acts, rituals and taboos so as to ensure their success by their linkage to the times of origin. One specific example of such a creative act is the yearly occasion of planting a garden. In some societies this is associated with the original creative death of a cultural hero. By being murdered or sacrificed his or her blood and body becomes the source of life for a society by producing (bringing forth) such staple foods

and taro, yam or coconuts. Retold from generation to generation by myths and reenacted from time to time by rituals the primordial times are solicited and become present. The ritual therefore involves the killing of a pig or in former times the sacrifice of a human being. This symbolizes the renewal of the original death of the cultural hero and the sacrificial blood sets the pristine life force into motion letting the planted food flourish and grow bountiful.

Similarly the initiation rituals in some societies are understood as being related to the deities and cultural heroes. Initiating young men or women thus becomes a creative act evoking a new life force for a new generation with society and ensuring that this generation is ritually modelled in accordance with the unadulterated life which was present in the time of creation.

#### The Spiritbeings inhabiting nature

Apart from being determined by past events human societies will generally also experience the powers interwoven with the forces of nature. In Melanesia this is expressed in relation to the masalai - spirits of the physical environment. They live as demons or wild monsters somewhere in rocks waterfalls, forest ponds or trees and explain the often inexplicable dangers which nature has in store for human beings. Such masalais can usually readily change form, becoming half human, half animal, a snake or a cassowary. Their dwelling place is jealously protected and any trespassing, such as noise, chopping of trees, or urinating may cause sickness or death. Therefore food and sexual taboos are generally necessary for anyone venturing into such an area, as it may be the case, while hunting, fishing or making a new garden. By sacrificing a chicken or a pig the masalais can be placated, otherwise they may 'eat' the souls of those breaching the lo of the spirit dwelling.

The relationship to the masalai - spirits suggest an awareness of the



dependence between human beings and nature. It is an archaic experience which still holds today in societies of highly sophisticated technology that human beings cannot arbitrarily dispose of nature without doing devastating harm to themselves. Only a harmonious dependence and mutuality will guarantee the survival of a society. The socio-cultural implications of this specific relationship are manifold, for instance both in economy and technology. An indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources will therefore always be regulated by what experience people make with their immediate physical environment. In the case of a family near Finschafen a boy got sick because he fell into a creek believed to be the dwelling of a water spirit. Within hours he had died, because all attempts to reconcile the spirit with a sacrifice had failed. Similar experiences serve to reinforce the many rituals within society which accompany such socio economic ventures as hunting, gathering, fishing and gardening, because they all bring human beings into contact with the spirits of nature. Establishing harmonious relationships to these masalais is therefore the basis for a success in the above mentioned undertakings.

### The Ancestral Spirits

Looking at the third category of spirits, namely the ancestral spirits, societies in Melanesia understand them as referring humans to their social context in which they live. The family is at the centre of this context. Included are the ancestors for they are still part of the living community, making their presence known whenever possible. Their attitude is crucial for the life of the living. If for instance in the Madang region the lo of social mutuality is upheld, the ancestors will readily respond in making blessing available to the living. This regulative function enforces the traditional customs and obligations within a society. Such social control by the ancestors must therefore sometimes inflict the living with sickness or even death, when family traditions, obligations or marriage rules were

neglected. Such breaches were usually reconcilable by getting together and sacrificing a pig in order to placate the wrath of ancestral ghosts, thereby securing their renewed benevolence.

Another area of the socio-cultural life which was linked to the ancestral spirits was the rituals connected with initiation. Apart from referring young people back to the mythological past, as mentioned earlier, a new generation was incorporated into the ancestral tradition, making them aware of the communal interdependency and the responsibility this entails for them. In many major festivals this was symbolized by elaborate ceremonies, reiterating the necessity that the whole cosmic order must participate in making the fullness of life possible for a society. This also inevitably involves a renewal of life for the ancestral spirits, because they are also linked to the mythical past by the rituals, just the same as the living. As the ritual enacts the primordial beginning of time the ultimate interdependence within the cosmos is expressed and symbolized. Looking at the socio-cultural consequences of ancestral belief it becomes apparent that these spirits were also instrumental in enforcing a communal spirit and cohesion within society. Any relationship to them had the obvious aim to impress upon the community that all aspects of life depend on the fulfillment of mutual obligations in order to strengthen the community. This was crucial to the continuity of life for it was the only way to survive overagainst the potential enmity of other societies. Great importance therefore was placed on the mutual obligations established by the various events of exchange. This was already evident for a child, who in its early childhood learns the complicated social relationships which form the network of support especially in times of crisis and change. In many societies mutual lo-relationships will be revealed in such events of exchange as payback, trade links or marriage. Among the Auyana People in the Eastern Highlands for instance the obligations of a man's clan for the family of his wife would continue throughout life until death, when the last 'bride-price' payment would be made. It is a major

concern in all such activities that the whole society is morally required to support one another no matter what the cause may be. This obligation is viewed as being beyond the limits of death and encompasses both the living and the ancestral spirits. It is the precondition for the experience of a fullness of life - or as theologians would say salvation.

This is also the conceptual context of the so-called 'cargo-cults'. These cults have arisen among people throughout Melanesia in the hope that prosperity and salvation can be ritually acquired by expressing the cosmic harmony in all relationships. If this comes about the ancestral spirits will generate the fullness of life among the living. This is definitely how the extreme prosperity and success of the European colonizers was interpreted. They themselves, their presence seemed to indicate that the primordial time was close at hand, for they were largely seen as the returning ancestral spirits. The fact of their impressive invasion into the Melanesian world was understood as the sign of the ultimate cosmic renewal and reconciliation. Within the socio-cultural context these so-called cults have had a long and persistent influence on all aspects of life and change within Melanesia. Therefore well nigh all major innovations in the last century seem to have been interpreted in the 'cargo-cultic' frame of reference. I believe this is the reason why Melanesians have initially accepted all changes with enthusiasm, be they in their belief system, in the introduction of cash cropping, business ventures, education or politics. Because they were all changes for a betterment of life, they were understood to be in accordance with the benevolent intentions of ancestral spirits.

### Conclusions

In Melanesia the concept of spirits is inextricably connected to the whole life of a society as it becomes evident in the socio-cultural spheres. Religion, social organization and culture are interlocked to such an extent, that spirits permeate virtually all aspects of life. Socially, religiously

and culturally men women and children are united by their common relatedness to deities, cultural heroes, land spirits and ancestors. People have reenforced this common bond with economic and ritual mutuality. An intricate system of obligations ensures a cooperation not only on the social level, but also in religious spheres. Thus the myths describe how everything came into being and consequently serve to sanction the behaviours of society in the various aspects of life. By referring back to a mythical past people were convinced that this original time of creation could generate a present era of salvation, just as it was reenacted from time to time by the faithfulness of the ancestors. Only by such a faithfulness both to the customs and also to the spirits can a society survive.

People in Melanesia have in time understood their relations to the spirits to symbolize what was important for the survival and wellbeing of a society. The past heretage, the relatedness to creation and the social environment are philosophical fundamentals which Melanesians here developed and expressed in terms of spirits. These fundamentals are common to all humality. Any theological reflection in terms of Melanesian world view will have to bear this in mind. I would therefore like to summarize the implications of the concept of spirits in Melanesian for a theology in following theses:

- 1) The Melanesian concept of spirits reveal how people are deeply aware that their whole life and being cannot be fulfilled alone by human will or action. Life ultimately comes from a source beyond them and is evident in a relationship to divine powers.
- 2) The Melanesian concepts of spirits reveal a knowledge that life needs a renewal and a reconciliation which can only be brought about by a divine death. Only such a unique and singular death can redeem humankind.
- 3) The Melanesian concept of spirits reveal that true life is only possible within the wholeness of cosmos. This makes reconciled relationships within the total cosmos necessary.                   ore the physical and social environment is

included and cannot be seen apart from the fundamental questions of life. This specifically also implies the relationship of humans to nature and creation.

4) The Melanesian concept of spirits reveal that true life needs to be experiential. It must therefore affect both the corporeal and the spiritual feeling of humans. Salvation can thus be never purely spiritual and must have consequences in the socio-cultural spheres of life.

5) The Melanesian concept of spirits reveal that the human perception of people and the world is largely determined by the past ancestors. They take part in the life as it expresses itself in the present.

6) The Melanesian concept of spirits affirm that the creation of the cosmos, the redemption of humans by the death of Christ and the sanctification within the fellowship of believers are ideas basic to traditional religion and common to all humans in their quest for salvation.

FOOTNOTES

1. Fugmann 1977, 1984

Sections of the Presuppositions are taken and modified from the article, Fugmann 1984.

2. Ahrens (1974) and Fugmann (1977)
3. Information Rev. Klaus Schrader, Neuendettelsau
4. P. Lawrance 1973 p. 203
5. MacDonald 1984

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# LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## A reaction to Dr. M. Schild

Yoshikazu Tokusen, Japan

1. First of all I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Schild for his presentation, that he gave us a clear introduction to "Luther's concept of the Holy Spirit". In his paper he showed us, what the Holy Spirit works for us (1 and 3), what the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit is (2), and how the Holy Spirit relates with the external (4). With these points he picked up main features of Luther's concept of the Holy Spirit and so showed successfully the dynamic work of the third person of the divine Trinity.
2. Luther and the Lutherans misunderstood and misinterpreted: it has been very often criticised that Luther had no doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Lutherans did not develop it later. Even a Wilhelm Niesel "wanted to support his total No to Luther's doctrine of the Holy Communion by saying: 'the Lutherans had of course right, if the work of the Holy Spirit did not belong to the Holy Communion. That they don't pay attention to the Holy Spirit in the Communion at the decisive point, that they don't think so strongly trinitarian, that is their failure'" (Calvin's Lehre vom Abendmahl, 1945, S.100, Quotation from A. Peters, Realpräsens, 1960, S.46). R. Prenter's book "Spiritus creator" was an answer to this kind of criticism. And in the framework of Luther's witness on Christ's Presence in the Holy Communion Peters also tried to respond. We can find several responses, though not many, during last decades. In Asia, where the Lutherans are late-comers, we should be equipped to be ready to answer this kind of misunderstanding, which is in most cases based upon naive interpretations.
3. Theocentric, trinitarian Theology of Luther: Luther's Theology is Theocentric, trinitarian Theology. This time I learned much from W. Link (Das Ringen Luthers um die Freiheit der Theologie von der Philosophie, 1955, S.145ff.), who in the framework of the doctrine of justification describes the Trinity in the following way: der Sohn als der vom Vater Gekommene (the Son as one who came from Father), der Vater als der den Sohn Sendende (the Father as one who sends the Son) and der Heilige Geist als das Kommen des Sohnes vom Vater (the Holy Spirit as coming of the Son from the Father). Different from the tradition Luther did not raise the question, how we can come to God, but how God comes to us (Hauschild, THE 208). This is just the consequence of what he himself struggled for and discovered. Instead of his question at the time of his

entrance to the monastery, how I can obtain the gracious God, he got the answer very unexpectedly, namely from just the opposite end; God comes down to us in His Son, Jesus Christ. With the Holy Spirit as coming of the Son from the Father it is assured, that what happened at Golgotha on the cross is not only for me but also we may get a part of that event (WA 18, 203). With the Holy Spirit we can live in the "Gleichzeitigkeit" (simultaneity at the same time).

4. Keep "pro me" always anew: "'Extra me' of Christ becomes 'pro me' in the Spirit" (Hanschild, TRE 209). Link steps a little further by saying: "being of the Holy Spirit with us is coming of Christ to us everyday. Through this the believer is kept in the living faith, in the living understanding of 'pro me' (148). With this "pro me", which is always anew kept by the Holy Spirit, we can confess God as one who came, as one who is with us and as one who comes to us. With this Holy Spirit also keeps us here in the time between Christ's cross and resurrection on the one hand and His coming on the other. He puts us before the fact that our justification has not yet been completed.
5. "Das Geschehen Gottes": the fact, that God gives himself to us, is the central concern of Luther. M. Seils emphasized this at the 6th. International Congress for Luther Research, Aug. 1983 at Erfurt. And the Holy Spirit is the gift and at the same time the giving, so that the gift is not a possession in human hand but that the gift is given by the Holy Spirit through the act of His giving everyday. The close connection of the Word of God with the Holy Spirit in Luther's understanding is the concrete side of the fact that the Holy Spirit is the gift and the giving at the same time. With this HE bridges the gap between the historical Jesus and us. HE brings Christ to us anew. With this the congregation, in which the Holy Spirit works, can be a congregation, which wait for God's coming in prayer. Thus the Holy Spirit makes the believer to man of prayer.
6. I would like now to mention several points, which are to be discussed further in the discussion. Since we are in Asia and are dealing with this issue consciously in our Asian context, we would like to come to the following points among others.
7. As Dr. Schild pointed out from Luther's Large Catechism, that "a plurality of spirits is acknowledged; among them the Holy Spirit is distinguished", this recognition is very important, since we live in an environment, in which spirits of many kinds are supposed to exist. The other presentations gave us certain informations in this respect, which would serve as material for our discussion. In what sense is the Holy Spirit distinguished from other spirits? How can we proclaim



and witness our faith in the third person of the Trinity into this context?

8. Asia could be described as area, in which people are tended to understand man wholistically. But "without the Holy Spirit the whole man is external only" (Link, 150, BS 175, 1f.). Only in the Holy Spirit we can find and accept us as human being wholistically. On the one hand it is the Holy Spirit, who keeps us from falling into our usual understanding of man, who, on the other hand prevent us falling into the modern psychological understanding of man.

9. "The homo spiritualis has his concretion not in the reality of the life, but in the reality of the Word" (Link, 153). Then in the reality of the Word, we could come to the reality of the life. What could Luther say about the Ethics with his concept of the Holy Spirit? What can we learn from him, in order to give witness in this context, in which people are tended to be ethical or moral?

10. The third verse from Luther's Hymn "Wir glauben all an einen Gott" (In one true God we all believe):

Wir glauben an den heiligen Geist,  
Gott mit Vater und dem Sohne,  
Der aller Elenden Tröster heist  
Und mit Gabezieret schöne,  
Die ganze Christenheit auf Erden  
Hält in einem Sinn gar eben;  
Hie all Sünd vergeben werden;  
Das Fleisch soll auch wieder leben;  
Nach diesem Elend ist bereit  
Uns ein Leben in Ewigkeit.

We all confess the Holy Ghost  
With the Father and the Savior  
Who the fearful comforts most  
And the meek doth crown with favor.  
All of Christendom be even  
In one heart and spirit keepeth.  
Here all sins shall be forgiven;  
Wake too shall the flesh that sleepeth.  
After these suff'rings there shall be  
Life for us eternally. (LW 53, 273)

11. So with the same prayer I would like to end my reaction "Veni, creator spiritus" (Come, Creator Spirit!), because "Creator spiritus venit" (Creator Spirit comes) to us everyday.

Some Remarks on Dr. Ji's Paper:

"The Works of the Holy Spirit and the Charismatic Movements from Luther's Perspective"

By

Akio Hashimoto, Japan

Dr. Ji has prepared for us a concise birds-eye view of the very important Pneumatological issues connected with the Charismatic Movements, together with his own challenging reflections on theological tasks imposed upon us by the movements. We are thankful to Dr. Ji for this orientation in the problem complex.

It may be interesting and important to take up some of the issues and topics to be clarified for a better understanding of the presentation, for instance, the distinction between "Stellvertretung" and Reziprozitaet, the differentiation of Christ as Deus praesens and the Spirit as Christus praesens already on page 2. Our time being limited, I would rather concentrate myself on the issue which I consider as pivotal, namely the problem of experience in Christian existence.

I found it very helpful that Dr. Ji deals with the problems raised by the Charismatic Movements from the viewpoint of experience.

As Dr. Ji classifies in his paper, 'experience' means a lot of things. But in the Neo-Pentecostal context, the term is to be taken as referring to the state of soul filled with the Divine presence, the state which manifests itself in a highly emotional form. In the following, I would like to present my reflections stimulated by Dr. Ji's discussion on the problem of experience.

In the thoughts of the Charismatic or Neo-Pentecostal movements, which, as presented by Dr. Ji, cut across denominational lines, the experience of God's presence in one's soul in a direct and empirically confirmable way has been emphasized as constitutive to an authentically Christian existence. This actually represents a definite interpretation of Christianity. In other words, this emphasis upon the immediate experience of God's presence touches upon the very core of the Reformatory concept of the Gospel in a very problematic way.

The issue seems to me to be this: In what does one conceive the salvation given by God consisting? Is it to be sought in the state of being brought into trance of spiritual experience, in an immediate experience of God? Or is the salvation rather not to be made depending upon an empirically confirmable experience of God's immediacy, and for that reason is it wrong to seek the affirmation of the reality of faith in extraordinary spiritual experience?

Now, the place of experience in Christian existence is to be reflected a little bit. As may be seen easily, experience as such is everywhere. Christian existence, however it may be conceived, makes no exception. In fact, there can be no theology which excludes part and parcel experience. Without experience, faith or theology for that matter is only abstraction. Dr. Ji rightly points out the place of experience in Christian existence by referring to Luther in the formation process of his theology.

In an attempt to observe the difference between the so-called Enthusiasts and Luther in their theological conflict, one is to take note of the fact that both of them acknowledge the place of experience as a matter of course, *selbstverstaendlich*, so to speak. From this fact, it may be easily seen that the issue is not experience as such, but the content of experience. In other words, experience in its material aspect - and not in its formal aspect - that played a vital role in the struggle for the right concept of the Gospel. The

Enthusiasts (and, following Dr. Ji's equation, the present-day Neo-Pentecostals) want to see the reality of their faith confirmed by uplifted state of the soul being filled with the Spirit.

Thus, the function of the Spirit seems to be sought in "filling" the believer with divine, spiritual joy, more or less in the sense of the Augustinian fruitio Dei. Already here, in this connection, an observation may be added, namely that the keen longing for the reality of faith tangibly confirmed either in terms of empirically observable holiness on the part of the believer or in terms of the inner filledness with spiritual joy, may be understood as man's impatience over against the *Anfechtung* which, in Luther's theology, is to be borne up while in this dispensation and to be lived with by the strengthening and consolation of the Gospel, which in its own turn is given to man through the work of the Holy Spirit. So it seems as if a sort of religious shortcircuit in the "solution" of the problem of *Anfechtung* in Christian existence.

In contrast to this concept of the experience on the part of the Enthusiasts, Luther's well-known dictum, which Dr. Ji uses to explicate the place of experience in Luther's theology, namely, "*oratio, meditatio et tentatio faciunt theologum*", is quite instructive to see in which direction experience is conceived by Luther. It is not in the direction of mystical trance or extatic experience of fruitio Dei, but in the direction of man's existence of the cry de profundis in this existence. (This can be seen against the background of Luther's conception of man as a sinner standing before God the Holy, and this conception of man's problematic situation does not allow Luther to find any solution whatsoever in the "spiritual" experience, for even there he finds the very problem of sin.)

The Charismatics seem to presuppose such a soteriological idea that salvation ought to be tangibly realized already here and now, admitting little the tension intrinsically existent to this *eon* however "perfect" a Christian may be in his faith. We may state, therefore, as Dr. Ji points out, that the Neo-Pentecostals are seeking their salvation in terms of *theologia gloriae*, and not in terms of *theologia crucis*.

The experience in Luther's theology is not an immediate one, not a direct experience of God, passing by man's reality of sinfulness, but a mediated one by faith in Christ the Redeemer. Joy in soul is that given by the promise of forgiveness. In a sense, one should say that faith produces a new type of experience, an experience of God's favor which is capable of sustaining the believer in the up-and-down fluctuation in Christian existence. This experience given by and in faith, may not always have excitement, trance, exstacy and the like, but it actually provides a Christian with joy, peace, inner strength, which is firm even in trials, thus being "wirklichkeitsfaehig". It may be said to represent the Lutheran spirituality, to use Dr. Ji's term.

Now, however, an important issue should be included at the end of this "reaction", namely that the concerns of the charismatics for a more living faith have been generally acknowledged as legitimate, giving expression of protests against forms of false objectivism in the form, for example, of only repristinating the "time-honored" doctrinal system. And Dr. Ji also sees the legitimacy of the charismatic concern in this sense. I certainly agree with him on this.

We must say, however, that it is not the content of the inherited salvific doctrinal substance, which has been responsible for the aridness and lifelessness which have been playing a vital role in inducing the Neo-Pentecostal movement, but it may have been rather an insufficient sensitivity to ever-occurring new situations with its challenges and needs, and also perhaps theological idleness which has its share in the failure of actualizing the impact of the Gospel.

To the very last, I should like to add a little but important remark, namely that while Dr. Ji describes the functions of the Spirit as comforting and enabling ("Comforter and Enabler") it seems to me more important to describe the primary function of the Spirit as "enlightening". Not in the sense of intellectual enlightenment,

to be sure, but in the sense of actualizing of the revealed truth of the Gospel of redemption in the hearts of men. And this has very much to do with the Lutheran essential of the "link" of the Spirit and the means of grace.

## REPORT ON THE THIRD LUTHER STUDIES SYMPOSIUM

### I. Introduction

Under the theme of "The Holy Spirit and Christian Witness in Asia" thirty-two persons from various parts of Asia and of the world met from December 6-11, 1984, in the Intercontinental Hotel, Makati, Metropolitan Manila, to hear lectures and to discuss problems and challenges for Christian witness in the setting of Asian religions and traditions.

This symposium was the third in a series of Luther study conferences sponsored by the Asian Program for the Advancement of Training and Studies (APATS) of the Department of Church Cooperation in the Lutheran World Federation. The first symposium was held in Hong Kong in December 1980 and concentrated on themes related to the Confessio Augustana on the occasion of its 400th anniversary. The second symposium was held in Bangkok in December 1982 under the theme of "Luther's Thought on Nature and the Natural in Asian Contexts".

The plan and structure for this symposium were developed by the Preparatory Committee, which met during the Bangkok Symposium in December 1982 and again in Hong Kong in March 1983. Members of the Preparatory Committee were Prof. Yoshikazu Tokuzen (chairperson), Dr. Andrew Chiu, Dr. Choong Chee Pang, Dr. Siegfried Hebart, Dr. Gnanabaranam Johnson, Bishop Andar Lumbantobing, and, representing the DCC/LWF, Rev. Satoru Kishi.

### II. Contents of the Symposium

In keeping with objectives as defined by the previous symposium (Bangkok 1982) and with the theme "The Holy Spirit and Christian Witness in Asia", the following lectures and reactions were presented:

- I. "Spirit and spirits in animistic religions" by Dr. Jose Fuliga. Reactor: Dr. Adelbert Sitompul
- II. "Spirit and spirits in classical Asian religions and traditions" by Dr. Andrew Chiu. Reactor: Dr. G.D. Melanchthon
- III. "Concepts of Spirit and spirits in Asian sociocultural spheres" by Dr. Sutan Hutagalung. Reactor: Rev. Gernot Fugmann.
- IV. "Luther's concept of the Holy Spirit" by Dr. Maurice Schild. Reactor: Prof. Yoshikazu Tokuzen.
- V. "The work of the Holy Spirit and the charismatic movements" by Dr. Won Yong Ji. Reactor: Rev. Akio Hashimoto.

The first three lectures provided an overall introduction to the religions, traditional and sociocultural backgrounds in Asia and the question of 'spirits' in those contexts. The fourth lecture presented Luther's concept of the Holy Spirit in historical and theological contexts. The final lecture addressed the theme in relation to charismatic movements, urging that we make out Christian witness in our various settings more wholistically - in believing and learning as well as in experiencing and living.

After hearing and discussing the lectures and reactions, the participants divided into three groups for intensive discussion of questions and issues raised by the presentations. The reports of the three groups are attached to this statement.

We have received stimulus to our thinking and new insights in regard to our Asian settings. We recognize the pluralistic nature of our Asian scene and at the same time we profess both the uniqueness and the universality of the Christian gospel as we give witness to it. We affirm that our task is to communicate the gospel in its core meaning to the people of Asia.

Following the group work the participants came together in three plenary sessions to discuss the group reports, to share in general discussion, and to formulate statements of evaluation and recommendation which here follow.

### III. Evaluation

Each of the three discussion groups presented evaluation reports which were then discussed in the plenary sessions. The following is a collation and summation of the group reports, made in light of the subsequent discussion by the plenary group.

#### 1. General evaluation

There was unanimous affirmation of the value of such symposia for sharing common concerns among Asian scholars and church leaders. The participation of representatives from other continents, and from communions other than Lutheran, added valuable depth and breadth to the discussions and contributed to mutual enrichment.

#### 2. The lectures and discussions

The lectures and the formal reactions were generally well received. The discussions were perceived by the several groups as being "excellent" and "in depth" and also as being helpful and practical for the churches.

However, it was felt that the load of material presented in the lectures was too much for the time available. In consequence there was not enough opportunity for theological reflection on the topics and for thorough discussion of them.

In order to enable adequate preparation and to allow for full discussion during the symposium, it was reiterated that the lectures should be distributed to participants in advance and that lecturers should make their presentations within the scheduled time. (Such directions were given by the Preparatory Committee but in practice they were not consistently adhered to.)

#### 3. Miscellaneous suggestions

a. Future symposia should include lectures by scholars other than Lutherans.



b. Asians should serve as recorders for group discussions in order to frame the reports as far as possible from an Asian viewpoint. (Editorial assistance can be given as necessary by others for whom English is their first language).

c. After the theme of a planned symposium is chosen, relevant biblical and confessional materials might be circulated to the regions, asking for written responses relevant to their situations.

d. The need for the Preparatory Committee to meet prior to a symposium was reiterated.

#### 4. Evaluation of the series of three Luther Studies Symposia

The groups offered evaluations of the symposia series in so far as they were able to do so (only 6 participants had attended all three symposia; 14 had attended two of them, and 39 only one).

The symposia series has provided a great service in bringing together Lutherans in Asia for sharing doctrinal and spiritual concerns.

The focus on Luther studies was excellent for contributing to the development of Lutheran identity in the Asian context. The participants emphasized the need to publish the materials of all three symposia so as to be of maximum use by local churches, in theological education, and for general research.

### IV. Recommendations

#### A. Publications

1) Recommend that the materials of the three Luther Studies Symposia - the lectures, responses and reports - be published in one volume by the Lutheran World Federation.

2) Recommend that the Luther Key Words project, which aims to aid in understanding Luther in the Asian context, be continued under the direction of Dr. Jose Fuliga.

#### B. All Asia Matters

1) Asia Congress for Luther Studies. The series of three Luther Studies Symposia have stimulated interest throughout Asia in Luther studies and have made specific contributions in relating Luther's thought to the Asian context. In order to build on this foundation and to further promote Lutheran identity in Asia,

- we recommend that the Department of Studies of the LWF initiate the formation of an Asian Congress for Luther Studies, possibly as early as 1986, and that this congress include participants on a broad ecumenical basis.

2) Continuation of study symposia. The three Luther studies symposia have made valuable contribution to study and discussion in several areas of vital concern in Asian churches. The participants in the three symposia have been unanimous in their positive evaluation of such symposia as a means for sharing common concerns and for strengthening the Christian witness in Asia.

- Therefore it is recommended that the DCC/LWF continue to sponsor regional study symposia on a biannual basis

- and that the general theme for the next series of three symposia be "Lutheran response to the crucial issues confronting Asia today: spirituality; social, political and economic issues; religions"

### C. Area Matters

The group discussions of this symposium have raised a variety of concerns which relate to one or more areas of the APATS structure.

Therefore it is recommended that the churches of each area encourage their constituency to study the materials of this Symposium, and to provide for further study and relevant programs on a regional or interregional basis.

### V. Call for further concerns

This symposium has made specific recommendations addressed to the LWF, to APATS, and to the APATS regions. In addition to those recommendations we wish to draw attention to a number of further concerns which have arisen in the group discussions and are included in the group reports.

Those concerns include the following:

1. The universality and the uniqueness of our Christian faith.
2. "Mission" in regard to communication.
3. What it means to express Christianity "wholistically"
4. Our answer to people whose lives are filled with fear.
5. "Nonbaptized believers" and our understanding of baptism.
6. Charismatic movements in the church.

### VI. Expressions of Appreciation

We raise our voice in gratitude to the Triune God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit for bringing us all safely to Manila, Philippines for the Third Luther Studies Symposium; for protecting us from all harm and danger; for preserving us all in good health and for guiding us in our discussions and fellowship together.

We express our thanks to the Lutheran World Federation/Department of Church Cooperation for providing the funds and personnel assistance to make possible the holding of this symposium as well as the two previous symposia held in Hong Kong in December 1980 and in Bangkok in December 1982.

Our thanks also to all the members of the Preparatory Committee namely: Dr. Yoshikazu Tokuzen, Chairperson, Dr. S. Hebart, secretary of the two previous symposia; Prof. Gnanabaranam Johnson, Dr. Andar Lumbantobing, Dr. Andrew Chiu and Bishop Dorairaj Peter and to Rev. Maynard Dorow, secretary of the third symposium, for the fine job they have done.

We regret that various circumstances have made impossible the participation of Dr. S. Hebart, Dr. Walter Altmann, and Dr. Choong Chee Pang in this Third Luther Studies Symposium.

We acknowledge with thanks the efforts of the essayists and reactors in preparing and presenting their papers for this symposium. The essayists were: Dr. Jose Fuliga, Dr. Andrew Chiu, Dr. Sutan Hutagalung, Dr. Maurice Schild and Dr. Won Yong Ji. The reactors were: Dr. Adelbert Sitompul, Dr. G.D. Melanchthon, Dr. Yoshikazu Tokuzen, Rev. Gernot Fugmann and Rev. Akio Hashimoto.

We acknowledge with thanks the participation and valuable contribution of international and ecumenical participants to this symposium including that of Dr. Per Loenning of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg.

Finally we wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the local preparatory committee for the fine work they have done in making this symposium a success and in making our stay in Manila an enriching and pleasant experience.

#### Report of Working Group I

I. The central point of the Christian faith in general and Lutheranism in particular is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. The central task of Christianity in Asia is to communicate both the uniqueness and the universality of Jesus Christ. Thus, for example, we can speak of the Hidden God both in other religions and in Christianity. But there is a difference between the two. For in Lutheranism we have the simul, God who is both hidden and revealed. It is this revelation of God, the incarnation, which is unique.

II. There is always a tension between Christianity and culture. The Asian context is characterized by a great plurality of cultures. At the same time culture exerts an enormous influence over people. Culture is a given; it is the set of eyeglasses through which we view all of the world around. Christianity is also a pair of glasses through which we view the world. However, in most of Asia today Christianity is still not a given but is something one aspires to or decides for. The tension between Christianity and culture will not disappear but will hopefully be a creative force and not the contrary.

A major factor in most of the culture of Asia today is fear. This is perhaps a world phenomenon. Nonetheless it is real in every place in Asia. Now more than ever the Church must be able to speak to the fears of people - both personal fears and national fears. If perfect love casts out fear, the Church must be able to bring the answer to all fear.

III. Much has been written elsewhere about the contextualization of Lutheranism in Asia. Asian theologians have the task of moving through the study of Lutheranism in a Western context to a Lutheran theology for Asia.

There is also always a balance or tension between the needs of the local scene (contextualization) and the broader church (universal church or unity). This balance or tension changes at different times. An example of this is to be found in the HKBP in Indonesia. 30 years ago it was essential that there be a Batak version of the Augsburg Confession (contextualization). Today there is great interest in the original Confessio Augustana. It, along with other Lutheran documents, has been translated. The Batak confession has a different purpose now. Its role is to help to understand the universal Lutheran Confession (universal church or unity).

There are many other questions which the Lutheran Church must address in different ways in different contexts. Some examples are dialogue with other religions. How Lutherans live their daily lives, how Christianity is expressed 'wholistically', to name just a few.

IV. In a sense, one of the most important questions for Lutheranism in Asia today is communication. The church is firm in its faith and its understanding of the uniqueness of the incarnation. What is critical today is how to communicate that in the various Asian contexts. This is an ongoing and never finishing work for the church. It is at this point that the work of the Holy Spirit is so important.

V. The Holy Spirit assists in the work of the church today in every different context. The Holy Spirit has two roles - a universal one, and a unique one. As the creator spirit, the Holy Spirit relates universally to all cultures. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has also had the role of building up and sustaining the people of God which has been a unique or exclusive relationship with the prophets and the Kings of the Old Testament and the Church in the New. In today's world the Holy Spirit continues this work of the building up and sustaining the People of God. In this role the Holy Spirit can and does deal with and overcome the spirits in all cultures. The means of the work of the Holy Spirit today are myriad.

VI. The role of the Holy Spirit is particularly important as relates to charismatic movements and their effect upon the church. In much of Asia the expectation of culture is that the work of the Holy Spirit will function supernaturally. This is partly what makes the charismatic so appealing. That they are a problem for the Lutheran church is no question. In many places, in Malaysia, for example, many Lutherans come to Lutheran worship at 9.00 and then go to the Pentecostal service at 10.00. The rea-

son given by these Lutheran parishioners is that they think they find extra spiritual nourishment in such Pentecostal experiences. It is here that the Holy Spirit can be most helpful to us - in examining the spirits, even the spirits in Pentecostalism so that our parishioners will come to see the shallowness of the nourishment of Pentecostalism.

VII. Lutherans, although a minority of a minority in most of Asia must work to be both critical and creative of their identity in Asia. Lutheranism in Asia ought to be what it was in Europe in the XVI. Century - a movement rather than an institution.

VIII. Lutheran spirituality has a long tradition, dating back to Luther himself. A strong understanding of Lutheran spirituality is very important for the churches in Asia. It is clear, however, that this spirituality will have different emphases in different Asian contexts. An example of the differences can be seen in the two regions of Asia, of India and of those areas influenced by Confucian thought. In the former one moves in spirituality from the universal to the individual; in the latter it is the reverse order. Lutheran spirituality will need to speak to people in both these and other contexts. The richness of the Lutheran heritage offers resources such as the Small Catechism which will be most helpful here.

IX. The task of the Lutheran churches in Asia today is exciting and overwhelming. We know that we alone are incapable of the task but with the help of the Holy Spirit the future is open.

#### Evaluation

##### 1. Manila Symposium:

- a) appreciation for its being held
- b) discussion excellent, work in greater depth than previously
- c) time seemed too short for what we tried to do
  - not enough paper time (difference of opinion)
  - not enough discussion time (plenary or small groups)
- d) too many lectures on phenomenology, not enough on theology, would have been helped by reading papers prior to coming
- e) a lot of good work in this session which needs to be shared
- f) why all non-Asian representatives in one discussion group?
- g) would like a consensus document of some kind or other
  - prepared by Preparatory Committee tonight and discussed in plenary tomorrow

##### 2. All three symposia:

- a) positive overall reaction
- b) momentum needs to be continued
- c) all three consultations results need to be professionally edited and published by a well-known publisher
- d) need results available for various levels
  - i. local congregations (need to be translated)
  - ii. for theologians and theological educators
  - iii. for general research (both in church and to other groups)

### 3. Recommendations for future:

- a) programs need to be continued on these levels (perhaps with different sponsors and different funding for different levels)
  - i. Asian congress on Luther studies to be held every four to five years (1986 first?). Object would be to stimulate thinking and broaden knowledge of Martin Luther. Invite non-Lutheran scholars.
  - ii. continued APATS symposia for Lutheran theologians with the topic for the next number of sessions (3?) to be issues in Asia in the 1990's.

The recommendation was also made that the next symposium be on the subject of spirituality. The exact topic was not precisely formulated although the recommendation was it be well-defined and not just something broad like Lutheran spirituality.

- iii. area consultations for three different regions in Asia: India, Indonesia-Melanesia, the area influenced by Confucian thought.

- b) the program might have a broader ecumenical make-up. We need to hear from other religions what are new developments within them. We need also to know how they see and respond to Christianity.

### Report of Working Group II

The members of working group II reviewed with appreciation the five study papers and the written responses to them, based on the theme: The Holy Spirit and Christian Witness in Asia.

Several of the papers focused on the subject of Spirit and spirits in the non-Christian religions and traditions of Asia, and particularly on the so-called animistic traditions, beliefs and practices of past and present.

The present report, accordingly, briefly summarizes the deliberations of working group II under the following headings:

1. The so-called animistic religions
2. The Holy Spirit and his work in general
3. The place of the Holy Spirit in Christian witness in Asia.

#### 1. The so-called animistic religions

In the so-called animistic religions an integrated world of man, nature and spirits is seen as penetrated and everywhere moved by mana-like powers. Factors such as tradition and faith, nature and technology, observation and reason, individual and group initiative, all have their appropriate relative roles, which may not be the same as the roles assigned to them in other cosmological systems.

The classical understanding or interpretation of what animism is can be often misleading and degrading, as if animism can only be found among so-called "primitive" or "backward" peoples. Even our modern time of technological and scientific achievement is in actuality full of belief in spirits as the motivating and all-governing power for aim and action (even though we may note that animism may assume different sociocultural forms in pre- and post-technological societies).

Competing and mutually contradictory worldviews are a fact of life in traditionally animistic societies today. The so-called animistic religions reflect cosmologies and anthropologies that differ strikingly from models or reality that are presupposed by Judeo-Christian tradition and dogma on the one hand, and by twentieth century ideologies of secular development and of socioethical functionalism on the other.

Contemporary animistic societies in Asia, Melanesia, and elsewhere in the world share with Christian tradition an unwavering conviction of non-empirical realities in human life, social and personal. They inculcate strong ethical values reinforced by the sanctions of tradition and society. In the firm bond they weld between religion and the society of the living and the dead can be seen an analogy to the communion of saints.

More important than any mere listing of positive qualities, however, is the readiness of Christian churches today to give to the traditional religions the respect that is implicit in open-eared reflection and understanding, and to recognize that God's Holy Spirit has been and continues to be active in and through them in his witness to the divine law in the world, while so, in the order of creation, stimulating and producing through their lives many necessary gifts for the positive development of peace, freedom, social welfare, and respect for the dignity of human life.

For example, we should recognize in Islam the sense of the majesty of Allah and the consequent reverence in worship and the sense of brotherhood. In Hinduism we find a prominent and deep longing for contact with the ultimate reality conceived as spiritual. Confucianism believes in the moral order of the universe and consequently insists on moral conduct. In the heart of Buddhism lies the deep sympathy for the world sorrow and the unselfish search for Nirvana.

At the same time the Christians' view of other faiths must also be critical, testing all things, and holding fast to what is good. In animistic religions the holy and the good have often been divorced from each other, and spirits are seen as subject to human manipulation, and even imprisonment. To hold on to old ways for their own sake is self-defeating. What is needed in the world today is not tradition as such, nor confrontation as such, but God's gifts to the world by whatever means, for this life and for the life to come. (In the context of the discussion of spirits in animistic religions it was noted that theologians should also continue to study the place of spirits in the Old and New Testaments. The relation to spirits in 1 Sam 16:14 ff. and in 1 Peter 3:19 are examples of difficult texts in this connection.)

## 2. The Holy Spirit and his work in general

A deeper understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit, in the life of Jesus and at work in the church and in believers, would help to provide answers both to the existing concepts of spirits and to the questions of the witness of the Christian community.

Avoiding superficial and merely nominal comparisons, we must be careful to make clear what we mean by Spirit and spirits, because confusion of the two results in seriously distorted theology, teaching, and practice.

What is said about the Spirit of God in the temple of academic and theological discussion may also fail to reflect accurately what is being witnessed about him in the market place of daily life and practice.

Among the questions discussed by working group II were the following:

In what ways can the Holy Spirit be said to be active in the nonChristian religions?

In what way is he and can he be at work today in the order of creation, both within the Christian church and within non-Christian religions, for truth, peace, health and human welfare in general?

Where is the Holy Spirit at work in the world as mediator of the old creation, and where is he at work as mediator of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17)?

Can we affirm today, as Luther did in the Smalcald Articles, that "God will not deal with us except through his external Word and Sacrament" and that "whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacrament is of the devil"?

What view can be taken, and what can be learned, of the Spirit's presence and work among the reported nonbaptized believers of India, or in the nonchurch movement in Japan?

In reference to the so-called "charismatic" movement, it was noted that "charismatic" Christians are often seen as diligent, zealous and spontaneous in their Christian life, given to prayer, and ready to offer themselves and their possessions in the Lord's cause.

This calls for a critical self-examination by the so-called mainline churches. On the other side "charismatic" Christians at times appear to manipulate the Holy Spirit in a manner reminiscent of manipulation of spirits in animistic rituals; while the zealous rebaptizing of those who have already been baptized with water into the name of the Triune God seems an example of an arrogant spirituality.

In what way is the Holy Spirit at work in the charismatic movement? What are the real sources of strength and of weakness in that movement? What can traditional Lutheran ethos learn from the charismatic movement?



### 3. The place of the Holy Spirit in Christian witness in Asia

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit sent by Christ from the Father. He is the Spirit of truth. He is the Spirit who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. The Holy Spirit, in the Christian witness of Asia and of the world, effectively witnesses through Word and Sacrament, to the divine/human person of Christ, the only Son of God, and to Christ's ministry as the only Saviour of the world, through whom we receive forgiveness of sins and become righteous before God by grace, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us, etc. (AC IV and V); Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

Simultaneously and with equal clarity and effect the Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ as the Lord who wills and proclaims freedom, healing and unity (Luk 4:18 ff), not only in a spiritual but in a sociopolitical and in a religio-cultural sense.

What does it mean for Asian Christians and churches today, in the most practical terms, that the Holy Spirit, who called us through the gospel, enlightens us with his gifts? And that he sanctifies and keeps us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith?

Can old theological structures, and even old scriptural and confessional formulations provide the framework in which the Spirit's witness can be borne in all spheres in Asia? Are the old formulations too rigid to be effective? Is the Holy Spirit flexible enough to perform his saving and liberating ministry of witness through traditional structures, Christian as well as non-Christian?

What are the criteria by which the truth of the Spirit's witness may be known and believed?

Asian Christians need an authentic understanding of the Spirit and his witness. We need forms and patterns of response to the Spirit's witness and ways that are not foreign, ill-fitting and intrusive. We need forms and patterns of response to the Spirit that are, and are clearly seen to be, right, good, true and appropriate for Christians in Asia.

Such patterns and forms of response are not less but rather more universally human just because they are fitted to human particularity.

We in Asia need appropriate tools to assure that we are not forced into theological idleness but instead enabled to engage in the theological task where it needs most to be done, i.e. at the level of the people, in full and free partnership with the Holy Spirit of Christ.

As a follow-up to our Third Luther Studies Symposium we recommend that the LWF consider sponsoring an APATS study institute on the nature of Asian spirituality, giving substantial attention to what can be learned for Lutheran spirituality in this connection.

We also recommend that steps be taken to facilitate and assure that the present topic of the Holy Spirit and Christian witness in Asia can be studied throughout the APATS areas by groups at the grass roots level.

### Evaluation

1. Most of us did not attend all three symposia. Therefore it is hard for us to say anything definite about the whole series.
2. Mwakabana: It is valuable to invite people from other parts of the world for mutual enrichment.
3. Hashimoto: For me, this symposium opened new perspectives. It was provoking and stimulating.
4. Karjalainen: These meetings are important for us as a new mission in Thailand. Here we meet other Asian Christians...we are not isolated.
5. Jackayya: I missed bible study on the Holy Spirit.
6. Rajashekar: There was not enough opportunity for real theological reflection. In future symposia good papers could also be heard from non-Lutherans.
7. Burce: A rather heavy load of material, quite a proportion of which only indirectly related to the topic of Holy Spirit and witness in Asia.
8. Chiu: There is a real need to have a Preparatory Committee meeting between symposia.
9. An approach to consider: Choose a topic; write up the biblical and confessional materials on it and circulate some months in advance; ask each APATS region to provide a response related to its situation.
10. Group 2 seconds the recommendations of Group 1.

### Report of Group III

1. Members reflected on the concept of spirits, their reality and its affirmation or denial in various cultural contexts, viz. traditional Asian, biblical, megalopholic. The variety already indicated in the papers was underlined by examples from the experience of members. And the persistence of attitudes indigenous in traditional settings in the modern city (or civilization) was noted alongside the modern secular rejection and loss of belief in spirits; such loss, it seems, does have something to do with technical progress, as e.g. electrification.
2. This prompted further consideration of the relation of attitudes to spiritual realities. Otherwise apparently inexplicable phenomena even in modern technical settings continue to challenge any easy denial of the reality of spirits, irrespective of human responses. On the other hand, that many 'moderns' live as in a world free from spirits is not disputed. It was also pointed out that new forms of dependency and enslavement (are they analogous to the 'spirits'?) are real in modern metropolitan societies.

3. The church is not bound to respond to claims of the spirits in their terms. Indeed, the church's adherents come into the orbit of the power of the Spirit of God, i.e. Spirit of another order, from beyond us and beyond the whole creaturely realm - which can be said of none of the small letter 's' spirit types, however subtle or starkly satanic. This does not mean that the difficulties of individuals or groups with spirits or with their past will not be treated sensitively, seriously and with patient, pastoral understanding. And decisive affirmation of the power of the Spirit who is the Lord can be accepted. Under God our responses should endeavour to get beyond disjunctive alternatives and diagnoses such as e.g. organically conditioned epilepsy or demonic possession, psychiatry or prayer, etc. 'Counselling' came into view in this connection.

4. While the disadvantages of fitting the varied phenomena of other societies into a system were recognized, it was also felt that the spirits (e.g. in the Melanesian world) signal basic needs relevant to all human beings, namely, to relate to the past as well as to the physical and social environments.

5. If some rituals are primarily symbols of 'harmonious relationships' rather than attempts to manipulate the spirits to gain their favour, as suggested by recent findings, then a direct confrontation between such heathen rituals and the 'sola gratia' principle may well be avoided and Christian witness may use and take possession of such forms for the gospel.

6. A question regarding the formulation of the Symposium's overall theme led to the reminder that according to the New Testament the spirits are defeated in the victory of Christ; in practical mission situations this victory may well be most relevantly expressed in terms of the incomparable Spirit of God overcoming the spirits - and without being reduced thereby to a 'functional substitute. Examples for more than one approach were cited from the mission history of India.

7. That Christian witness to the Spirit will include the ethical dimensions is seen as being of crucial importance, especially in the context of societies characterized by 'wholistic' understandings of life. The question of experience and the yearning of periodical renewal, highlighted and responded to by charismatic movements, were identified as a challenge to Lutheran theology and churchmanship; and the relevance of the movement for Christian unity among the various churches was also affirmed in this context.

8. Members considered difficulties of the church dealing with superstitious practices, be they residual or resurgent. Various reactions were noted, such as types of 'accommodation' practiced by the Roman Catholic Church in many areas, or the 'split-level Christianity' in individuals. Members advocated the 'baptizing' and taking-over of concepts and customs of previous non-Christian cultures, at the same time filling them with new meaning (cf. the use of the word 'logos' in John 1). In this process lines of continuity and necessary discontinuity may not always be easy to distinguish; appropriate measures of church discipline may prove as difficult as essential.

9. Post Vatican II Catholicism, it was felt, has become more actively engaged in confronting evils in the social and political realm; and this seems to be connected with a new emphasis on the bible. - Attention was also drawn to different types of charismatic movements; one type appears interested in self-fulfillment of various kinds and rarely ventures into the social or political scene in a critical way, another expresses 'a love that takes risks' and exists with the real needs of people (e.g. the base-groups in Latin America). - This led to the question of Lutheran involvement in the social and political realm. A certain quietism has been noticeable here, probably connected, it was suggested, with a misunderstood doctrine of the two kingdoms as well as with historical ties to the state ever since the principle cuius regio eius religio (ca. 1555). A much misunderstood Reformer ought not to hinder us shouldering true Christian social responsibility, nor should historical alignment of churches and princes. Salvation 'by faith alone' does not mean that faith remains alone in life and ethics. The example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer was cited.

10. Various facets of communal worship promoted by charismatic groups but not always catered for in Lutheran worship were discussed. The problems have to do with the accommodation of various levels of emotional expression, and involvement of children and other groups defined by age, interest, social class, or financial (in)ability. Neither good tradition nor flexibility ought to be sacrificed, if possible. Bible-study groups ought to be encouraged despite possible criticism of the church and its leadership which may emerge from such circles. There is, it was agreed, much "catch-up work" to be done by the Lutheran churches. Openness to learning what it is that attracts people to new types of study, singing and liturgy was advocated and accords with Luther's own views of worship and its forms. - Seasons of renewal, including and also going beyond the church-year, ought to be promoted; they are opportunities for deepening appreciation and reapplication of the gospel - in terms of liberation from sin, from fear, etc.; opportunities for the restoration of the meaning of Christian existence in daily life.

### Evaluation

On the series of symposia:

1. The topic was a necessary one in the attempt to establish identity for Lutheran ethos and doctrine in Asia.
2. The series has been helpful in bringing together Lutherans in the Asia region for sharing doctrinal and spiritual concerns.

On Third Symposium:

1. The time was too short. Specifically, more time should be provided for discussing each paper immediately after its presentation.
2. Lectures should be printed and distributed in advance.
3. Lecturers should present their papers within the time limit given.

4. Consideration should be given to having members of the Preparatory Committee serve as chairpersons of the groups in order to give more specific direction to the discussions.

5. Suggest that Asian serve as recorders of group discussions in the effort to frame the reports with an Asian outlook.

#### Recommendations to the churches

1. Lutheran churches should continue to foster the development of prayer services and liturgies for occasions of significance in the lives of people, occasions formerly requiring recognition of or homage to the spirits; several dimensions were mentioned: the family altar, dedications, death anniversaries and seasonal agricultural events.

2. The provision of guidelines for worship allowing for a variety of participation and the expression of different emotional levels should be attended to urgently. The collection and publication of such guidelines and orders, which can be shared in our area, should be undertaken through the LWF.

3. That we encourage the production of materials based on biblical texts and helpful to ordinary people in relation to charismatic movements in local areas, and that these materials be shared with regional APATS committees.

#### Recommendations to the Symposium:

That a new symposium be planned (consisting of three meetings) and that it concern itself with the church's response to politicoeconomic and social problems in the Asian region from the point of view of Lutheran theology.

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